

**CHOREOGRAPHIC RESEARCH COMBINING
CONTACT IMPROVISATION AND THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE:
SOMATIC, PRACTICE-BASED-RESEARCH, AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN DANCE,
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

April 2017

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ABSTRACT

Somatic practices, practice-based-research (PBR) and ethnography contextualize this choreographic research that moves from the studio/stage to the desk. My project investigates how integrating the Alexander Technique (AT) and Contact Improvisation (CI) principles, combined with theoretical studies in PBR and ethnography expand psychophysical coordination for dancers, teachers, researchers and choreographers. I primarily ask: What theoretical and methodological principles guide my dance research in order to move beyond teaching dance technique or choreographing a piece? To address my inquiries, I choreographed, danced and taught with dance artists from Canada, Japan, Europe, and the USA. The culmination of my research offers a new dance methodology to facilitate the multiple internal/external awareness necessary for an embodied choreographic process.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Mazda Kahnamyipour, for his ongoing and endless support and to my son, Kian Liska Kahnamyipour, for reminding me of the value of being present in the moment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the York Dance faculty for supporting me to complete my degree with an MFA. I am fortunate to have Patrick Alcedo as my advisor and outside eye, for his expert guidance, knowledge, and passion for teaching me how to research dance; Susan Cash, for her depth of questioning and creative input; and William Mackwood, for his technical expertise and patience teaching me the technological basics and beyond.

I am forever grateful to my AT teachers, specifically Susan Sinclair and Sakiko Ishitsubo, who continue to guide me to embody the AT principles in all aspects of my life. I have deep appreciation for my dancers/co-creators and collaborators: Madison Burgess, Tori Kelly, and Amanda Torres from the research in November 2015; Pam Johnson, Susan Lee, Mika Lior, Zita Nyarady, Madison Burgess and mentorship from Karen Kaeja from the June 2016 research; Susan Lee, Louis Barbier, and Mateo Galindo Torres from the March 2017 research; and videographers Farivash Babanorouzi, Olya Glotka, and Hannah Schallert.

I am especially indebted to Takako Segawa for organizing my trip to Japan and *C.I.N.N.* Tokyo Dance Company performers and teachers, in particular, Hiroko Takahashi, Minori Nagai, and Maaya Fukumoto. Many thanks to *aLOFT* Dance Company, Rebecca Bryant, Nina Martin, the Toronto Contact Jam community, *RAW Taiko Drummers*, my fellow MA and MFA classmates, Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Master's Scholarship, Mazda Kahnayipour, my son Kian, and Ruth Liska and Aniseh Kahnayipour for helping with childcare.

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INTRODUCTION

Somatic practices and embodied research models contextualize my project using an interdisciplinary approach to access fresh ways of thinking, practicing, performing and writing. F.M. Alexander, somatic pioneer, rationalizes that “no human activity can be said to be wholly 'physical' or wholly 'mental,' but that all human activity, in whatever sphere, is a psychophysical activity...” (21). Emphasizing the interrelatedness of the mind, body, and identity, I plan to integrate the practices of AT and CI in my choreographic investigation, contextualized by embodied scholarship, ethnography and PBR. My analysis is informed by my 18 years of experience as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer in CI, intertwining principles of AT. Integrating these embodied approaches facilitates psychophysical changes in myself while choreographing, dancing and writing.

CI draws on a mind/body connection while two or more dancers spontaneously interact to efficiently and effortlessly execute momentum-based partnering. CI scholars, performers and choreographers have articulated the essential and undeniable link between the mind and body. Somatic practices like AT have influenced the development of both CI (Novack) and traditional Dance Techniques (Nettl-Fiol and Vanier). However, no formal scholarship addresses how AT and CI principles combined can facilitate an embodied choreographic process.

Embodied choreographic research requires that I follow self-reflexive analysis in my methodologies. Ethnography, PBR, and somatic theories and practices frame my qualitative methodology within dance and embodied scholarship. Observation and self-observation are key elements to these disciplines. The foundation of ethnographic work is participant observation combined with self-reflexivity. Ethnographers like somatic practitioners are continually practicing the art of understanding others in the context of themselves and in relationship to

changing surroundings. Self-reflexive ethnographic notes and theoretical discussions around identity politics impact my choreography and my writing. The foundation of PBR is to combine research with training. PBR, ethnography and somatic disciplines together emphasize the importance of searching and re-searching with purpose. Investigating the common theoretical goals, I explore notions around self-reflexivity versus self-indulgence and process versus product oriented research. To further support my project, I draw from F.M. Alexander's texts and AT and CI literature. My personal on-going work with AT Master teachers and dancing/choreographing with various dancers overtime are essential components in my analysis. Using a non-linear methodological approach has made the order of events in my fieldwork less significant than these four intersecting topics: Ethnographic Ethics, Embodied Observation, Clarifying Thinking and Research Not Training. My embodied choreographic investigation will expand and create new knowledge for dancers, choreographers, teachers and dance scholars.

Research Questions:

This project will explore the following major questions interwoven by my main topics, which are answered non-linearly through my paper.

- Ethnographic Ethics: How is choreographing dance comparable to ethnographic work?
What steps can be included for my project to be ethically and accurately conducted?
- Embodied Observation: What is the history of AT intersecting with CI, particularly the defining principles and applications to dance creation and performance? How does my overall use as a choreographer affect my dancers, from the first rehearsals to the final piece? How can combining AT and CI principles re-educate choreographers to expand the dancers' overall psychophysical expression?

- Clarifying Thinking: How does opposing the separation of the mind, body, emotions, and culture influence my choreographic process interchangeably from the studio/stage to the desk?
- Research Not Training: How do ethnography and PBR scholarship intersect?

Personal Investment in Research

My research in CI started in 1998 and continues to develop in my roles as a teacher in a post-secondary institution, dancer/choreographer in *aLOFT* and *Flightworks*ⁱ, and regular participant in CI jams. After suffering from a debilitating back injury in 2006 where I could not walk for three weeks, I began studying AT to reduce injuries, on the recommendation of Pam Johnson. I have continued to pursue my studies of AT with Susan Sinclair, and in 2010 we began to co-teach a workshop for dancer improvisers called *AIM: Alexander Technique Informed Movement*.

Scholars identify that when performing, the predominant focus of the CI dancer is on physical sensation (Foster) and less on the emotional, intellectual or sociocultural potential in their performance. As a professional dancer/teacher/choreographer, I've experienced these ideas when dancing CI and noticed that when I focus solely on physical sensation the result is a less nuanced performance. Working with choreographers Pam Johnson, Karen Kaeja, Susan Lee, and Rebecca Bryant, continue to deepen my insights on choreographing to embody the kinesthetic form of CI and also fulfill compositional elements. Structured improvised scores and pre-set phrases are included in my final choreographies. I discuss the challenges and benefits of choreographing and performing using CI, in reference to CI scholarship and personal interviews with teachers.

Overview of Dance Fieldwork

The embodied methodologies of CI combined with AT shape my dance research, contextualized by theories within ethnography, PBR, Dance studies and somatics. My methodology demonstrates how experiential theories shift my psychophysical consciousness. Few opportunities arise where I can collaborate with artists that have extensive experience and are actively engaged with CI in multiple ways as dancers, teachers, scholars and choreographers. My fieldwork consisted of dancing, performing, teaching, and choreographing in multiple sites in Toronto and Tokyo with various dancers and collaborators overtime. The majority of my analysis is based on my most recent collaborations in 2016-2017: dancing/co-creating with *aLOFT*ⁱⁱ (CI Toronto dance company) and C.I.N.N.ⁱⁱⁱ (CI Japan Dance Company), participating in CI workshops, interviews with CI choreographer/teachers, and lessons/workshops/interviews with AT Master teachers Susan Sinclair^{iv}, Meade Andrews^v and Sakiko Ishitsubo. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, I collected data from a range of sources: formal interviews, dancers' journal notes, group discussions, informal conversations, fieldnotes, videos, photographs, and audience feedback. I taught and performed in Tokyo^{vi} in May for an international CI intensive alongside European teacher/choreographer Goran Bogdanovski from Slovenia. C.I.N.N. dance collective produces the annual festival for an eclectic mix of professional dancers, teachers, actors, musicians and community dancers. The festival culminates in an improvised ensemble performance by the members, invited teachers and guest musicians. Self-reflexive references to my informal and formal interviews with three C.I.N.N. members, performers and teachers Hiroko Takahashi (founding member and organizer), Minori Nagai (my interpreter) and Maaya Fukumoto (CI dance scholar) contextualize my analysis. AT Master

teacher Ishitsubo from Tokyo, whose AT teacher training workshops I attended in Toronto in July 2016, was one of the three guest teachers in Japan. She also attended my workshops and witnessed my performance in Japan. Her perspective as both a participant and observer is invaluable to my research. In Toronto, inspired by a 4-minute piece I choreographed on three of York's undergraduate dancers in the fall of 2015, I developed the work into a 13-minute piece in June 2016 with *aLOFT* and 15 minute revised piece in March 2017. I co-founded *aLOFT* as a platform for research and performance of CI. We celebrate our diversity in experience, dance style and age (22-58 years). The dancers' experiences vary from emerging to long-time performers of dance improvisation, with extensive choreographic/ performance/ academic/ and teaching careers. The June research culminated in a studio showing with a small invited audience at the Artscape Youngplace IGAC studio in downtown Toronto and in March at York University. The *aLOFT* dancers in June included Pam Johnson^{vii}, Susan Lee^{viii}, Mika Lior^{ix}, Zita Nyarady^x, Madison Burgess^{xi} and mentorship from Karen Kaeja^{xii}. The March presentation included dancers Susan Lee, Louis Barbier^{xiii}, Mateo Galindo Torres^{xiv} and myself. AT principles enhancing psychophysical coordination, somatically and theoretically anchor the analysis of my choreographic research.

Limitations

Necessary delimitations were required around an in-depth analysis of the socio-political history of CI as in Novack's work, which would be too broad a scope for this project. I do not speak Japanese and in Japan I required an interpreter for my work because the majority of the dance artists do not speak English. I will self-reflexively consider the impact of having my work interpreted by Minori Nagai, who has experience in CI but not in AT. I have completed several

years of extensive training in AT teacher training program, I actively co-teach a workshop with Sinclair, and in one year I will be certified as an AT teacher. Without certification, I will not use AT hands-on work with the dancers, and will only investigate how my practical and theoretical work with AT informs my choreographic process. In a more extensive study I would also want to interview these CI choreographers integrating AT: Benno Voorham (Sweden) and Chris Aiken (USA).

CHAPTER ONE

Research Not Training Informs Ethnographic Ethics

The data is garnered through synchronic case studies and studio research conducted as a choreographer/dancer/teacher and then layered diachronically with a historical overview. The purpose of my research is to expose how individual movement choices - whether conscious or not - are physically, emotionally, socially, culturally, and historically embodied. “While dancers may normally perform...without conscious attention, ethnographic researchers reach for it”, argued by dance ethnographer Deidre Sklar (72). Furthering Sklar’s discussion around consciousness, as a dance researcher, I work to develop varied movement materials by increasing my conscious attention. Embodied practices of AT and CI in my studio research, interviews, and workshops framed by embodied scholarship shift my psychophysical consciousness. As a dancer and researcher my practice is to interrupt my desire to know the answer, allowing freedom and comfort in my mind and body to experience the unknown.

Reproducing my familiar movement from previous years is not effective scholarship, without considering how my training can lead to unknown discoveries. Theatre and practice-based researcher Ben Spatz in *What A Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research*, is concerned with the lack of epistemological accuracy in PBR and argues for scholars to use clearer methodology. He theorizes that accurate scholarship investigates how research could uncover unique discoveries. Combining training with research, refuses the separation of the mind and body. He argues that, “...if practice is to be research, the outcome of that practice cannot just be more practice”, rather researchers need to develop “new technique” (243). Spatz draws on social epistemology to look at how knowledge is produced to understand how knowledge and truth are determined through interpersonal interactions with others (24, 25).

Spatz exposes that embodied research is not defined as practice and research together, but instead claims that practice equals research. “What training cannot logically signify is the development of discovery of new technique: new pathways in materiality, newly recognized patterns and forms in which one might then proceed to train” (137). AT examines the relationship between how my thinking and use of my body directly affects my movement choices. Anchored by PBR theory, the process of how I attend to myself psychophysically while dancing will inevitably impact the depth of my research.

Ethnographic Ethics: Interdisciplinary Dance Research Methods in Embodied Thought

My conclusions drawn from my dance fieldwork are shaped by my personal standpoint bound by gender, culture, age, and training. Any conclusions I make are filtered through my identity and perceived relationships with my informants in relationship to the past and the present moment. Reflexive ethnography consciously includes the voices of the researched to address the power relations inherent in the dynamic between the researcher and researched. Theresa Buckland’s book *Dance in the Field* includes articles by authors predominantly from ethnology and anthropology. In her introductory chapter she argues that because dance is made by people, ethnography is an ideal methodology for discussing dance from a postcolonial perspective, outside of the confines of traditional western studies of dance. “People make dances and it is this agency of production which has often been neglected in mainstream paradigms for the study of dance” (3). Feminist ethnographers identify the inherent power imbalances between the researcher and the informants. Regardless of how collaborative the process is, the researcher makes the final decisions for the analysis. Helen Thomas in *The Body, Dance, and Cultural Theory*, refers to feminists like Judith Stacey who argue that exploitation is more evident as the

relationships become more intimate (71). Generated through postmodernism, including self-reflexivity in the analysis acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher.

By including conflicting opinions from my informants and myself, I hope to offer a more in-depth understanding of my work. Sociologist Amanda Coffey in *The Ethnographic Self* discusses the exchange of influence between the ethnographers and informants in the field. Being self-reflexive disrupts the positivist theory that there is one secure source of objective knowledge. Instead a post-positivist approach includes diverse perspectives from fieldnotes and a range of scholarship to reveal the intersections and contradictions inherent in ethnographic work. Self-reflexive ethnographers openly reveal contradictory emotions to provide a more ‘authentic’ analysis. Coffey demonstrates how self-reflexive fieldnotes can be included as research rather than just self-focused notes, by interweaving multiple and conflicting viewpoints contextualized by current and historic interdisciplinary scholarship.

Cited by numerous dance scholars, Clifford Geertz argues for ethnographers to study culture “thickly”, meaning to study cultures from various perspectives and to situate themselves self-reflexively in the work. Inspired by Geertz and Sally Ann Ness, a dance ethnographer, I interweave historical references, dance and anthropological literature. Dance contains scholarly groundwork toward fresh ways of thinking and practicing when movement is examined from a variety of settings (Albright). Including descriptions from ethnographic fieldwork is common, yet framing it to validate the ethnographer’s workplace as scholarly requires an embodied investigative model. Cultural anthropologists like James Clifford challenge the definition of scholarship to include fieldwork. Notes from fieldwork are traditionally viewed as subjective and therefore not an accurate form of scholarship. Ness demonstrates how fieldnotes can be included in scholarship and speaks about her visceral writing process which simultaneously draws from

her body memory. Ness's ethnographic work includes detailed descriptions of the dance form to comprehend the dance as a structured system of meaning. Ness's self-reflexive ethnographic approach, my work weaves memories and non-linear interpretations of my fieldwork. Donald A. Ritchie, scholar on oral history, emphasizes the importance for contextualizing first-person oral interviews to a variety of written sources. Dance reconstructors and historians like Ann Cooper Albright are inspired by Susan Foster's urge for dance scholarship to use embodied methodologies. Embodied methodology led Albright to new historical insights, requiring her to physically and intellectually discover answers to her questions. Feminist theorist Nancy Miller pushed Albright to include her body in scholarly work and prove the validity and necessity to use her dancing body as a historical research method (7). Informed by Albright's embodied approach, I apply Alexander's principles to include psychophysical awareness of myself in the process of researching and writing. I contextualize my fieldwork drawing on CI and AT scholarship, Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), PBR, ethnography, and dance scholarship.

Self-Reflexivity During Short-Term Fieldwork

After spending such a short period of time in Japan, my challenge is in conveying and analyzing my experiences without jumping to stereotypical conclusions. Since the 1980s conducting multi-sited ethnographic work has become more accepted within anthropology. Ulf Hannerz in "Being there...and there...and there!" reflects on strategies to adequately administer multiple and short-term anthropological fieldwork in comparison to traditionally long-term, single-sited fieldwork. He emphasizes the importance of finding interconnections. Traditional anthropology has been preoccupied with comparative studies in order to emphasize differences. Instead, Hannerz acknowledges the similarities and differences by recognizing the patterns

within our global communities (208). Developing personal connections in a short time impacts the depth of the study and the willingness for informants to share more personal information. “To some extent personalizing encounters in the modern, multi-site field comes not so much from deepening particular interactions as from the identification of common acquaintances” (209). I had multiple points of connections in Japan, despite never having traveled there before. My connections in Japan were few but significant.

My sociocultural present and past identity impact my choreographic choices. Research depends on the awareness of our ability to know and understand; for my identity and inherent judgement as a researcher cannot be disguised, instead just presented with greater accuracy (McNamara 167). My identity as a choreographer, dancer, teacher, mother and my cultural background as a Japanese, Slovakian, Canadian shape and inform my work as a dance artist; any effort to block my history is reflected in my body (Jenkins). I had a strong connection to the main organizer of C.I.N.N., Hiroko Takahashi through Takako Segawa, a dance artist from Toronto who just had a baby and was not able to accompany us in Japan. Once I was invited I shared the news with my AT Teacher Sakiko Ishitsubo from Japan who I have worked with for over 10 years in Toronto. Originally Ishitsubo planned to attend the workshops as a student, but instead Takahashi asked my AT Teacher to be the replacement for Segawa’s workshops. My family, husband and a three-year old son, accompanied me on the trip, and we were received like family in all the houses we were hosted. It was truly overwhelming. One of the performers/teachers I met said to me that she felt like I was her sister. AT Teacher Ishitsubo said, “I feel lucky because I know you and have trust there...if it was not you, then it would have been much harder for me”.^{xv} Honoured to hear this from my teacher of many years, her statement also reminded me of the impact our relationships with other collaborators have on our work.

I had never been to Japan and due to my mixed cultural background I have had experiences mostly in Canada, which placed me as both an insider and a visible outsider in Canada, in Japan, and everywhere. Returning to my ancestral roots had a profoundly visceral impact on how I self-reflexively conduct and interpret my research. Positionality is necessary in my work and is perhaps incomplete without investigating my Japanese identity in relation to my choreographic process. This is a piece of me that has always been in the shadow, only explored through the eyes of diaspora, but had never been explored in Japan, the country where my grandparents originate from. I found myself yearning to be viewed as part of the family by my informants, a common romantic view valued by anthropologists conducting long-term fieldwork. I do wonder how my experience would have changed if I was living there on a long-term basis. Short-term relationships have this ‘honey-moon’ quality, where we always notice the similarities before the differences. Yet as Hannerz emphasizes, in order for people to allow themselves to connect closely, they also need to be reassured of a mutual connection. Although I only had long-term relations with just two of the collaborators in Japan, these mutual connections fostered intimacy with my new hosts. I experienced just as Hannerz explains, that the community network that established the research opportunity can facilitate quick and close bonds.



Image 1 Rehearsal in Tokyo by C.I.N.N. with guests Bogdanovski and Liska. May 5, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.

Sociocultural Embodiment in Dance

Emotional and physical interactions with others are socio-culturally constructed. The choices I make as a researcher are influenced by my perceived and actual experience of the dancers according to their culture, class, and gender, in addition to their skill, focus and rapport with me. Similarly, the dancers' choices are influenced by the material I present but also determined by their emotional response according to how they identify with me. Ethnographer Dorinne Kondo, in *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, is informed by feminism, postmodernism and psychological anthropology. She explains that emotional meaning is a product of social life that is culturally and historically embedded in our day-to-day correspondences (40). Kondo emphasizes that including conflicting, ambiguous, and in-depth perspectives challenge stereotypical conclusions.

“Above all, my Japanese friends, co-workers, and neighbours helped me to see and to appreciate the complicated tangle of ironies and ambiguities we create for ourselves, and that are created for us, as we craft ourselves and our lives within shifting fields of power” (Kondo 308).

Inspired by Kondo, I value exposing the shifting emotional and physical responses that manifested as our perceptions of each other changed.

Interpretive anthropologist Clifford Geertz permeates dance literature. Sklar extends Geertz’s sociocultural investigation of a person’s physical gestures, to rationalize that a person’s movement reveals her/his cognition, emotion, and cultural knowledge (1991, 6; 2001, 32). Socioculture, physical, and emotional experiences influence perception and learning. Nina Martin, an American ensemble improvisational dance choreographer and scholar, notes how culture and history shape movement choices. She reflects on her teaching in Japan, concluding that people in Japan are able to quickly execute ensemble scores because collectivism is more culturally valued, whereas soloing within the ensemble is less valued (14). Phenomenologist Sondra Horton Fraleigh affirms, “...dance contains our cultural heritage, the very constructs of our historied body” (196). In a workshop with Martin, she observed my habitual choice to duet or ensemble, rather than solo^{xvi}. I can definitely relate to my Japanese Grandma’s subtle reminders favoring collectivism. To be a more versatile improviser, I recognize that my personal work is to become more prepared and inspired to solo. I wondered whether my discomfort/disinterest in soloing is connected to my cultural roots? To deepen the inquiry around the impact of culture informing our movement choices, I question my desire to want to compare, contrast and categorize one aspect of my cultural identity over another.

Anthropologists influenced by deconstructionism, feminism, and post-structuralism question objectivity in researching the ‘other’. Objective data driven methodologies have the underlying assumption that there is an absolute ‘truth’, contrast qualitative, interdisciplinary

methodologies, which have more value placed on the subject analyzed from various perspectives. Derrida deconstructs Freud's value of objective interpretation stating that an observer cannot separate oneself from the subject, but rather there is a fluid relationship between the two (38). The struggle to communicate with words has led us to separate and define ourselves in relation to the 'other'. Diana Taylor, post-structural archivist, urges researchers to embrace the confusion, the contradictions, and the celebrations toward dynamic 'intercultural' communication (as opposed to a static cross-cultural comparison) necessary in this globally interconnected environment. 'Intercultural' communication offers a new sense of cultural identity to emerge from research.

Identifying cultural values unique to Japan, shaped and reshaped by history, deepens my research when informed by multiple perspectives. Dance ethnographers draw from sociopolitical, cultural and historical studies, contextualizing theories from outside of dance, and/or draw from kinesthetic experience, using methodologies developed within dance (e.g. Laban Movement Analysis, LMA) (Sklar 70). Regardless of the phenomenological base, Sklar outlines guiding questions dance ethnographers consider; "why do people move the way they do, and how does the way they move relate to how they live, what they believe, and what they value?" (6). Using a reflexive phenomenological process helps dance researchers to recognize their pre-understandings, and values examining movement from various disciplines. Hermeneutic theorist Joann McNamara rationalizes, "Rather than arriving at a *true* or *correct* interpretation through *objective* methodology, the interpreter instead shares the value of understanding the very essence of the subject itself, within its various settings" (181). McNamara uses a hermeneutic phenomenological theory to explain that a person interprets movement within a specific cultural

context. Dance is a document that reveals the beliefs and values of the choreographer culturally, sexually, religiously, politically, and anatomically.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Overview of AT and CI Literature

AT re-educates, and as a result my choreographic process ultimately includes an educational component where I draw on AT teaching philosophies and practical manuals. AT scholar Barbara Conable, references Wendy Morris' research, to categorize the main somatic practices within education to therapy. She explains that, "AT leads the column at the Education end of the continuum...with dance therapists, energetic therapists, and body awareness educators in between" (Conable "The Relationship of the Alexander Technique to Somatic Therapies"). There are several texts that include the history and main AT principles as follows: use and functioning, primary control, unreliable sensory appreciation, end-gaining, inhibition, direction, and the means-where-by. Clarification of some of these terms will unfold in my paper in a cumulative progression, layering and expanding the definitions toward the end. To define the AT principles, I draw on the classic text by Frank Pierce Jones, *Body Awareness in Action: A Study of the Alexander Technique*, and a more recent text, by Michael Gelb, *Body Learning*. Most of the AT dance literature investigates the influence on dance technique (Bluethenthal; Eddy; Fortin and Girard; Huxley, Leach, and Stevens).^{xvii} More significant to my analysis is a collection of interviews and essays on contemporary dance technique included in *The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training* by Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettle-Fiol. Toward the end of the book they include interviews with Senter and Aiken reflecting on how AT informs their teaching of improvisation and CI. I further Bales and Nettle-Fiol's work by conducting and analyzing my fieldwork informed by self-reflexive ethnographic scholarship.

Historical Overview of AT and Dance

F.M. Alexander suffered from ongoing respiratory and vocal problems starting from birth in 1869, and continuing into his life as an actor in the 1880s (Gelb). He sought medical advice, receiving some temporary relief, but his recurring vocal problems would immediately return during performances (Alexander, *Use of the Self*). Frustration, determination, and curiosity led him on a journey of self-observation to gain awareness of his movement habits and in doing so, invite possibilities to change the habit. By the 1890s Alexander had returned to the stage with even more success than before and was teaching his technique to mainly actors and musicians. F.M. Alexander includes anecdotal notes on working with students, such as philosopher and educator John Dewey. Self-reflections encompass F.M. Alexander's theory in his third book, *The Use of the Self*, to reveal how he works with different students with particular challenges (e.g. speech, performance anxiety, and health problems). Dewey was instrumental in coining phrases for techniques still used by AT teachers today called "thinking in activity", which is a way to work with the AT principles while conducting a chosen activity. For instance, a dancer can work on a particular phrase of movement and the AT teacher would support the student using verbal and physical 'hands-on' direction. AT teachers work with students to access a more whole body integration through teaching functional anatomy intertwined with hands-on direction. While working with the AT principles, teachers place their hands on students to offer the student a new psychophysical experience. In Barstow's teaching lineage, "thinking in activity" is often taught to students in a group in addition to one-on-one lessons. Dewey developed 5 phases of "reflective thinking" (Chatfield 126). Phase one is called "suggestion", which is similarly known in AT as "inhibition". Alexander's second book, *Constructive Conscious Control*, describes and philosophizes on how to become more conscious of our movements, thoughts,

actions, and feelings toward greater awareness and fulfillment of ourselves. The historic text is a necessary guide for teachers on how Alexander applied his method. “Inhibition” as defined by F.M. Alexander is a process of attending to the awareness of our whole self by momentarily suspending our usual habitual movements and thoughts which stimulate our “unduly excited fear reflex” (Alexander, *Constructive Conscious Control*). When fear reflexes are stimulated, dancers can work with the principles to re-educate and re-coordinate using the ‘means-whereby’. The ‘means-whereby’ describes the process of changing habits to first notice, then interrupt, and finally to re-direct toward a more efficient use of ourselves (Gelb). My practice as a writer and choreographer is to allow the space to listen psychophysically by ‘inhibiting’ my habitual ways of working and redirecting a more efficient use of myself.

Meade Andrews has written several articles on how to teach AT group classes, such as “An Etude a Day”. Her “Thinking Etude” teaches students how thoughts impact movements. In a workshop I attended, she asked us to sit back in our chairs and reflect on our physiological response to the following three statements:^{xviii} The first statement was, “I must do it fast and get it over quickly”. In response the class commented on holding their breath and overly tensing their muscles, especially their necks and backs. The second statement was, “I can’t do it and I give up”. People reflected on feeling overly relaxed in their bodies and physically collapsing down on themselves. The third statement was, “I am at ease with myself and I have all the time I need”. The class responded by saying they felt an ease with breathing and then talking less about their physical state they commented on feeling a sense of, “liveliness”, “heightened attention”, and “overall sense of calm”. (*ibid*) “Inhibiting” habitual thoughts and consciously replacing them with psychophysical awareness, allows for unknown discoveries, with the added benefit of finding more satisfaction and pleasure while researching.

Alexander's work never became internationally popularized in his lifetime, taking until 1973 for worldwide recognition.^{xix} Due to less extensive scholarship on dance choreography and performance, I draw on AT acting literature to analyze the components of somatically-driven creative processes. In *Integrative AT Practice for Performing Artists*, Cathy Madden, AT acting teacher and writer philosophizes that disassociating ourselves from our goals and desires while performing any activity results in discoordination. AT acting guidelines, by Madden, focus on unconstructive and unconscious thoughts which Alexander referred to as 'mind-wanderings' that interfere with optimal performance. Her guidelines supported me in rehearsals as a dancer and co-creator with Rebecca Bryant^{xx}, who is a guest choreographer from L.A. and inspired by CI and AT. Most of Bryant's material required the dancers to improvise; however, she did teach us a short choreographed solo in our research in December 2015. Being less confident learning her choreographed material, I immediately noticed my habitual response to simultaneously over-strain muscles while feeling a sense of anxiety. My personal obsession with perfection permeates my life, both blocking creativity and unblocking me to refine my skills. My fieldnotes during our research wavers from satisfaction citing that I am "proud of my work", to criticism, "I feel so down learning new material... I should take more dance classes" as a way to improve my skills and build confidence.^{xxi} Madden observes that disassociating ourselves from our goals and desires while performing any activity results in discoordination (18). She explains that performers can work with the principles to reaffirm personal desires and needs. Two simple self-reflective steps are outlined: first, identify a particular situation where you want to include the AT principles (i.e. warm-up, rehearsal, performance) and secondly, reflect on how the situation supports your larger goals/desires in life (18). Her steps led me to ask myself the following questions while rehearsing with Bryant: How do I feel while learning the solo? Is there any part

of the solo that interests or disinterests me? Can I invite a sense of curiosity as I learn, rather than anxiety? Can I notice sensations of tightening and holding and then choose to stop using unnecessary tension? Reconnecting with my desire moment-to-moment, helps to coordinate my psychophysical awareness.

Part of my preliminary research for my choreographic case study, included my work in the Choreography course in the fall of 2015. Improvised and set phrases were included in my choreography of “Elemental” with three undergraduate students. Due to time restraints to adequately train my dancers using somatically-based CI scores, I relied on more set material in my final piece. As theorized by PBR scholarship, I predictably shifted away from a process mode of working and into product mode, the latter mode more conducive to pre-taught phrases. I turned to Madden’s guidelines to support a more somatically driven process among impending deadline pressure. Her guidelines prompted me to ask my dancers specific questions before and during rehearsals. Often their answers directed me on how I could quickly clarify their thinking to express specific thematic parts, deepen their emotional engagement, and heighten their physical movement vocabulary.

I learned that the quality of the warm-up I lead my dancers through had a considerable impact on the performance. Two of my dancers are also in the York Dance Ensemble (YDE). The showing preceded an extended warm-up I led for YDE inspired by the somatic AT principle of “inhibition”. I used the practice of “Constructive Rest”, where I asked the students to lie down on the floor to invite a moment of “inhibition” to their practice. I asked them to consciously notice where they may have any excess tension in their muscles and to invite a softening and ‘undoing’ of muscular effort. Then I asked them to notice what they were thinking about and rather than pre-judge or habitually follow their thoughts, I invite them to simply notice their

thoughts without having to respond in any particular way. The only task for them was to return to noticing their breath, notice the contact they had with the floor and notice the sounds they heard around them. Working with “inhibition” during the choreographic process, including pre-show warm-ups, requires psychophysical awareness of one’s whole self to interrupt habitual movement and beliefs in order to enhance performance. The dancers embraced the warm-up and they all commented on how refreshed and ready they were to dive into the physically demanding lift sequences that followed. My two YDE dancers’ noted that their performance was more physically and emotionally engaged than previous nights, demonstrating the AT theory that constructive inhibitory thinking coordinates physical movement. Conversely lack of consciousness manifests as excess physical tension, restriction of breath, anxiety and/or claims of boredom (Madden). AT scholars write, and I witnessed in my dancers that heightened awareness and desire manifest through an overall physical fluidity, an ease of breathing and a feeling of satisfaction while dancing.

Historical Overview of CI

CI scholars, performers and choreographers have articulated the essential and undeniable link between the mind and body. CI is psychophysical spontaneous interaction between people interacting with weight, momentum, gravity, and intuition. Cynthia Novack, a pioneering dance-ethnographer, wrote the first scholarly text on CI in 1990, contextualizing theories from outside dance, such as cultural studies and history, and using methodologies developed within dance like LMA (Sklar 70). Novack details the history and culture of the development of CI, making key references to founder Steve Paxton, archival photographs of prominent CI dance artists, comparative analysis of CI to ballet, lengthy descriptions of CI using LMA, and comparing CI in

community settings to that of institutions. Developed by Steve Paxton, alongside students such as Nancy Stark Smith, Danny Lepkoff, and Nita Little, Novack discloses that CI combines, “social and theatrical dance, performance, and bodywork...” (52). John Faichney, a Toronto teacher, scholar, and dancer was one of the few men who performed in *Magnesium* in 1972, the public performance known as the initiator of CI (63). Faichney explains that Paxton was interested in, “how the body learns to take care of itself in any position, even when people are hurling themselves through the air and into each other”.^{xxii} During the formation of CI, the dancers were less controlled and precise when initiating into and releasing away from physical CI (Ryan). The initial development of CI was rebelliously in contrast to the hierarchical choreographic process common in ballet and modern dance pieces, and more in line with experimental dance/theatre performance.

CI dancer, choreographer, teacher, researcher and social activist Pam Johnson, illuminates personal politics as a source of inspiration in her choreography.^{xxiii} Trained by a student of Erik Hawkins in the late 1970s, Pam Johnson was introduced to AT and CI and various other somatic disciplines, such as Laban and Bartenieff. Hawkins studied kinesiology and eastern philosophy (i.e. Zen Buddhism) to develop his sensory-based training and theatrical dance style (Novack 30). Hawkins’ work for Johnson emphasizes efficient and organic movement prioritizing, “kinesthetic awareness over form”. Since 2005 I have worked as a dancer for Johnson, collaborating in her research to develop CI scores for performance. Johnson’s focus on the CI aesthetic of kinesthetic communication influences my research.



Image 2 Photo demonstrating the CI aesthetic of inner and outer awareness using torso-torso connection with momentum. Liska and Diana Rose in Flightworks, Johnson was a guest choreographer and mentor for company. Photo by Walter Lai.

Paxton's 'Small Dance' Meets AT

The Japanese martial art Aikido, studied by Paxton, taught the technical skills of “extreme stillness and extreme imbalance” (59). Paxton developed the “Small Dance” where dancers pay attention to subtle shifts of weight and muscle tension as a meditative exercise and somatic practice^{xxiv} (62). He discovered that by calmly slowing down a dancer’s movement in rehearsals one can allow for less disorientation and fixed habitual responses in order to uncover different physical pathways (Paxton, “Drafting Interior Techniques”). Paxton had not been exposed to AT principles by the time CI was “published” in 1972,^{xxv} yet his somatic practice of the “small dance” echoes Alexander’s theory of “inhibition”.

Learning to pause, even for half a second, while dancing takes training. Melinda Buckwalter, coeditor of *Contact Quarterly*, a journal co-founded by Nancy Stark Smith, explains

that sensory awareness within contemporary dance often requires dancers to initially slow down (21). Martin's^{xxvi} solo work intentionally contradicts slowing down. Instead she disrupts dancers' habituated patterns by asking dancers to move very quickly and rhythmically and without preconceived ideas to manifest "preconscious movement" (Martin 20). Nita Little, Master CI teacher in "Restructuring the Self-Sensing: Attention Training in CI Improvisation" specifies the how CI dancers can move quickly without losing the ability to think clearly.

"Dancers slow down the experience of time, not their actions, allows CI dancers' attention to align with the experience of touch, which, when attended to in this way, takes us deep inside relations that practitioners describe as inter-/intra-personal and ecological" (250).

My interpretation of the "Small Dance" continues to evolve informed by Martin's solo work and AT principles. Alexander's personal practice of self-observation, deepens my emotional and kinaesthetic engagement to enhance my learning process.



Image 3 Liska teaching with translator Nagai for opening warm-up inspired by AT practice of 'Constructive Rest'. May 3, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.

CHAPTER THREE

Somatics Expand Psychophysical Expression

Analyzing the CI Aesthetic Using LMA

All analysis is biased and for this reason it is essential for me to be meticulous while documenting to override my biases as much as possible. Movement analysis needs to understand the dance studied within its sociopolitical and historical roots to be fully understood, for there is no knowledge that is unbiased, as argued by anti-racist feminists (Brennan). Steven Chatfield reviews the history of scientific inquiry and questions how any study can be truly objective. He discusses that all research whether qualitative or quantitative is enmeshed in the sociocultural past, present and future of the researcher (141). Chatfield makes clear that whether deductive, inductive, or method-driven, conducting an experiment does not assume there is a final truth, but aims for the most accurate account for this present time. Detail-oriented documentation informed by LMA, helps to identify my own personal standpoint in my research on what, how and why I create using CI.

LMA has had multiple influences and continues to evolve since its inception in the early 1900s by choreographer/philosopher Rudolph Laban. In the late 1950s Laban's student Irmgard Bartenieff, influenced by AT, began to answer questions on the what, where, why, and how of movement (Bartenieff viii). The somatic aspect of the Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF) integrates with LMA to analyze the physiological components of movement initiation, spatial intent, and kinesthetic awareness (Brennan 289). LMA integrated with BF is both a dance methodology and choreographic resource for analyzing CI-inspired movement.

Alexander's concept of directing oneself in space complements Laban's concept of spatial intent. Dance and AT teacher/writer, Rebecca Nettle-Fiol reflects on how AT supports

dancers. She reveals that Martha Myers, in 1969, was one of the first dance teachers to integrate somatics using AT and BF (Nettl-Fiol 91). Similar to AT, BF investigates the internal desire to move by bringing awareness to the how and why of movement (Bartenieff 51). Including spatial intent can help expand dancers' kinesthetic communication. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, founder of *Body-Mind-Centering* and student of Bartenieff, articulates that, "...integrated reflexes, righting reactions and equilibrium responses..." (124) are underlying all efficient movement patterns. Ann Cooper Albright analyzes the process involved when our kinesthetic sense is enlivened while falling.

"The sensation of gravity, on the other hand, can activate the mid and lower brains, the more bodily and less symbolic areas of the brain that connect to the para-sympathetic systems of our being. Keeping those systems active in our modern, industrialized culture requires placing the body in situations where physical reactions must operate faster than the verbal mind" (*Taken By Surprise*, 147).

Dancers' equilibrium responses are activated when falling to access their spatial intent and protective responses. BF, similar to AT, helps to support more effortless movement qualities by organizing movement in relation to space.

LMA's wider frame of analysis reveals both the individual and relational preferences of the CI soloing aesthetic. For example, CI founder Steve Paxton has not been researching CI as a duet form for 15 or more years. Instead he has developed "Material for the Spine", a solo technique and choreographic process informed by CI.^{xxvii} Investigating the solo body within CI is a deepening in my initial research inquiry which predominantly focused on physical partnering. Novack's description using LMA, is similar to my analysis of the solos, which confirms that Bryant's solo material for *aLOFT* was inspired by CI.

I analyzed the rehearsal footage of the simultaneous solos informed by LMA from December 2015. The footage demonstrates the CI training of the dancers (Mika Lior, Zita

Nyarady, and myself) and choreographer Bryant. Our arms and legs reach to the floor as we fall, drawing on protective responses to avoid injury by including spinal organization, fluctuating use of weight by quickening time just before a fall and sustaining time just after a fall/jump, indirect awareness of space, and 3D shaping (spiraling) (Newlove and Dalby; Hackney). Nancy Stark Smith, one of the primary CI dancers, intertwines her studies of BMC (*Body-Mind Centering*) in her teaching and dancing of CI^{xxviii}, comparably to how I intertwine AT when I teach CI. Stark invented the term “telescoping awareness” to describe the practice of continually shifting attention from individual physical sensation to relating to others and the environment (Albright & Gere, 153). The movement preferences help dancers respond instantaneously to their kinesthetic awareness to space, gravity, and each other. In the Bryant’s solo research, we organized our “neuromuscular systems” with spatial intent (Nettl-Fiol & Vanier 170), and directed ourselves using far reach space and counter-tension. We initiated jumping to falling using homologous and then spinal (head-tail) organization to orient to the floor. Accessing first strong weight by pressing our feet into the floor, leaping quickly in the air, we land forward onto our hands. Spinal connectivity is evident. We initiate with our heads to fall to the floor and quickly re-organizing with successive sequencing. In Laban’s Effort mode,^{xxix} flow has polarities between free-bound, weight has light-strong, time has sudden-sustained, and space has direct-indirect (Brennan 288). Our repeated falls in the solo material illustrate how Bryant’s CI and AT-inspired movement draws on spatial intent, developmental movement patterns, and Effort qualities with 3D shaping, advancing, rising and spreading.

Interrupting the CI Aesthetic

Diversifying solo expressions alter the physical partnering by moving in similar or contrasting Effort mode qualities to each other. Martha Myers, Laban analyst and AT teacher, rationalizes that LMA can be used to expand choreographic material and performance presence (Nettl-Fiol 93). CI dancers develop new partnering vocabulary by varying Laban's Effort qualities of their use of time, weight, space, and flow to contrast the typical characteristics of a CI duet and, in doing so, to break habitual patterns and choreographic predisposition. Analyzing the solo aesthetic illustrates how I can include our CI movement preferences and also work in opposition to our preferences to inspire new CI-based choreographic work.

CI is commonly practised with people moving in continuous contact with each other, having little spatial separation, with back and forth weight sharing, and typically danced with even timing (Novack). In one particular rehearsal with Bryant, I was invested in my solo exploration while in physical contact with another dancer, and as a result of disrupting my even timing, I had less chance to pre-calculate how I would share my weight. Roles chosen according to size, shape and proximity disappeared, as I could not pre-judge the situation to know when, who or how we might lift each other. We were thrown into emergency states where our inherent reflexes took over to organize ourselves safely in and out of contact and as a result investigated new choreographic territory.

Repeating predictable set lifts using CI principles can be valuable in choreography. To develop new lifts requires pushing the boundaries of dancers' habitual choices. Bryant noted that the solo vocabulary reminded her of the initial videos documenting CI in the 1970s.^{xxx} Compositional theories further enhance our ability to recognize our movement preferences. Bryant has been performing, teaching and creating with the dance collective *Lower Left* for

several years. Martin and several other founding members of *Lower Left*, developed training systems to perform solo, duet, and ensemble improvisations interchangeably. Bryant explains that *Lower Left's* training systems are, “inspired by people like Deborah Hay, Anna Halprin, as well as *Viewpoints Theory* and poetic, narrative and performance art”.^{xxx} Martin studied with Mary Overlie, who developed *Viewpoints Theory* (10). *Viewpoints Theory* influences Martin’s work. In *One Idea*, she asked us to notice what our habits as a group are in line with two main aspects mentioned in *Viewpoints*: time and space. We then worked to manipulate our patterns to give more emphasis to certain events. If our habit might be to move our shape as a group every 10 seconds, instead, we would choose to hold one shape for longer to give more emphasis to that shape, and in doing so, show what we valued. When the timing is disturbed, “this forces us out of the endless flow so we can focus on ideas not just kinetics” (Martin).^{xxxii} Keith Johnstone, theatre director and scholar, argues that disturbing the timing is often when the audience is drawn in and pays attention to the details. Another score Martin teaches is the *Four Heavenly Choices: Static Shape, Moving Space, Moving Shape and Static Space*. We worked with the score in solo first, then in duets, and finally as an ensemble. In the duets, one partner chose a static shape and the other partner moved between the different states. Martin’s ensemble work really changed my thinking around CI. More choices became available to me and I could access a wider range of the form, which included gestures and character work.

Choreographing CI without compositional consideration limits the possibilities of CI as a choreographic tool. I regularly dance at the CI Jams, and as soon as we take the duet into a performance setting, our kinesthetic experience does not have a similar level of attention and engagement as experienced at a jam. In *Composing While Dancing: An Improviser’s Companion*, Buckwalter interviewed several prominent dance improvisers such as Simone Forti,

Anna Halprin, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith. Buckwalter references an interview with Martin about the challenges of performing improvisation.

“Martin feels that when improvisers focus on their personal movement vocabularies, their attention inevitably draws inward and they lose awareness of what is forming in the space around them – where other dancers are in space, what is being offered by other dancers, and how they are relating to one another” (Buckwalter 48).

Bryant expands on the challenges *Lower Left* observed when performing without compositional awareness. Bryant came to dance through visual art, and says that accessing visual cues to see the space and observe our movement patterns through AT principles, as a group enhances compositional components.

“Our eyes can be sensory noticing color and texture. If we lack sensory appreciation, can interpret information incorrectly...through AT our visual sensation gets turned into perspective...we can observe visually from the outside in, oscillating back and forth”.^{xxxiii}

Choreographers and dancers working with CI include compositional components along with somatic awareness as a way to diversify movement aesthetics. Interrupting habits first requires self-awareness in order to become more responsive in the moment. My work while practicing CI continues to be around knowing what my habitual choices are visually, physically emotionally and socially, in order to choose to shift my choices and from here widen my vocabulary.

In rehearsals with Susan Lee in December 2016, we discovered new partnering vocabulary by occasionally contrasting the common characteristics of a CI duet that relates to LMA with indirect use of space, free flow, changing use of weight, and shape qualities.^{xxxiv} We drew on LMA and compositional strategies as a method to create a CI-inspired duet. We began without a set plan, choosing a variety of improvisational scores to work from. Lee reflected on her conversations with CI teacher Martin Keogh.^{xxxv} Lee explained that he discussed the challenge of working with CI compositionally. We developed scores to physically limit our choices. In one of the sections our goal was to maintain our torso-to-torso connection while rising and descending

together through space. Our focus was predominantly drawing on our individual inner sensation with each other, and less attending to spatial composition. At the next rehearsal Lee suggested we experiment with an improvised score which would access more of an outer attention of the architecture of the space in relationship to our still and moving bodies. We progressively moved from soloing with one person witnessing, to simultaneously soloing, and finally in the last run of the score, to relatively continual physical contact while attending to the space around. We both discovered that our heightened attention to the space changed our movement choices while partnering. I commented that the high flying moments were less physically strenuous compared to the prior rehearsal. Lee commented that our partnering had more moments of direct linear



Image 4 Lee elevated by Liska, demonstrating CI with direct linear qualities, Rehearsal footage video, December, 2016.



Image 5 Lee perched on Liska demonstrating CI with direct linear qualities, Rehearsal footage video, December, 2016.



Image 6 Lee elevated, extending her left lower leg with direct use of space. Rehearsal footage video, December, 2016.



Image 7 Liska pressing Lee into wall after the lift above. Rehearsal footage video, December, 2016.



Image 8 Lee lifting Liska. Rehearsal footage video snapshot, December 2016

qualities. We extended our limbs into space more often, while still accessing an inner attention in the body mode with naval radiation. I made the choice to include the wall as another floor while carrying Lee on my shoulder. I pressed her quick and direct into the wall, where she descends to the floor initiating with a floating quality of light weight and indirect space effort. After being elevated by Lee myself, I was looking at the wall while I descended, in contrast to the inward attention that drives the CI aesthetic. I extended and held my leg front forward echoing the architecture of the white wooden paneled wall.



Image 9 Liska extending her limbs after the lift with Lee, Rehearsal footage video snapshot, December 2016

Lee suggested we experiment with being in contact by drawing on Laban's Effort qualities. We chose to alternate two opposing qualities: flick (indirect space, light weight and quick time) and press (direct space, heavy weight and sustained time). With flicking qualities we noted that we accentuated time. Newlove's description of time helps me define our movement using a flicking quality. The accelerated quick time and regular to irregular time-rhythm, emphasizes

fluctuations between accented and unaccented moments in time (117). Light weight qualities described by Hackney include words such as airy, delicate, fine touch, and buoyant, where strong weight is described as powerful, forceful, firm touch, and impactful (220). I combine Newlove and Hackney's descriptions to understand the bouncing pattern following my spin in free flow with some weight fluctuations and accented timing. Hackney explains that changing weight using a pressing Effort (direct space, sustained time, and heavy weight) draws on body connectivity from developmental patterns of yield and push (*ibid*). While flicking, my down beat was slightly forceful and the upbeat was more buoyant as I pushed off from the floor. The first few rounds of moving in the Effort modes were exhausting and our movement choices were less in physical contact. The physical contact we had was quite sporadic and somatically disconnected, and resulted in me having fears of injury. Yet we continued to be curious about the dramatic tension the two opposing qualities provided. We agreed that we needed to include a period of recuperation and perhaps interchanging the two Effort states would provide periods of rest. We experimented with reinserting the CI aesthetic into our partnering which could at times take precedence over fulfilling the task of dancing within the Effort modes. Satisfying moments unfolded.

We shifted our weight from light to heavy in the body mode. Swinging her legs with momentum, Lee changed her use of space in the low level. Hackney provides an example of runners needing to propel their centre of weight with spatial intent (43). Lee's spatial intent is clear; for example the vertical plane of her kinesphere changed from very low on her back to a low curled, fetal position on her shins. Newlove explains that, "Moving the body anywhere in space requires energy along a light-to-strong continuum" (120). Lee's momentum leg swings combines space and effort with body connectivity support. Swinging her legs she changes from

slightly strong weight to light weight. She changes her level from very low to low while her limbs move from near reach to far reach space.

At one point, Lee was slowly pressing into the floor using her hands while simultaneously pushing into me with her back as her arms extended in front of her. I was behind alternating between a flicking and pressing quality with my limbs and torso to move Lee forward on a diagonal. I was pressing my lower legs and sometimes hands randomly in and out of contact. Lee



Image 10 Liska flicking and pressing Lee with her lower leg, Rehearsal footage video snapshot, December 2016

held her arms open in front of her torso, which offered both a gestural significance and drew on her protective response reflexes in case she needed to organize to land quickly to the floor. Lee accesses a wide range of movement qualities with efficient total body connectivity. Her use of momentum and gravity shows her Effort mode changing from strong to light weight and direct to indirect space effort. A multitude of options present themselves by combining LMA and compositional theories with CI.

AT Practice of ‘Non-doing’ Facilitates Freedom

Senior AT Teacher and Director of Toronto’s teacher training program Sinclair says that while dancing CI you can use AT principles to organize yourself in relation to another person, without losing your own support.^{xxxvi} In a lesson while executing a challenging movement, Sinclair reminded me to pay attention to the space around, my breath, placement of weight, and contact with the floor.^{xxxvii} Sinclair explains that through hands-on-work as an AT teacher CI



Image 11 Sinclair using AT ‘hands-on’ work with Liska in A.I.M. workshop. Photo by Miki Shinozaki, 2011.

dancers show more “ongoing flow of support in movement”, accessing increased strength and freedom and allowing surprise by following momentum (*ibid*). Reducing holding and tension facilitates letting go of a preconceived idea of where you anticipate going in order to make new choices, moment-to-moment. AT scholar Melanie Bales describes how the misunderstood idea

of a proper ‘position’ or ‘alignment’ in dance training needs to be replaced with an understanding of ‘position’ as coordination which is dynamic and ever-changing.

“In many somatic practices, the body’s relationship to gravity is examined on and off the vertical axis, through exercises or experiences that require lying, sitting, or getting up and down from the floor. Alignment is not about standing straight or upright but rather about the changing relationships within the body, sensing balance, and avoiding unnecessary muscular holding so the body is open to possibility” (Bales 157).

The process requires diligence in “non-doing”, allowing a different response to a stimulus by accessing our ongoing support and freedom (Gelb). Working with the principles facilitates more kinesthetic and cognitive understanding to make new choices in the moment.



Image 12 In Tokyo, Sakiko uses a skeleton of the human body to teach accurate anatomical knowledge. May 4, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.

In a similar way, Bryant continually asked us to allow a “non-doing”, her continual reminders interrupted our habitual ways of moving. She guided us with prompts like, “increase of not knowing”, “a bit wild”, and “on a path or arc of a toss or a drop, you don’t actually know

where it will resolve”. Bryant’s repeated verbal prompts and encouragement allowed us to enter a place of surprise to push past our habitual movement choices. I noticed that as our time quickened, we showed more total body organization. Bryant continually asked us to pause and allow an unknowing, her continual reminders interrupted our habitual ways of moving. As a choreographer, her comfort in not knowing the answers allowed her dancers to also linger in a highly curious but unknowing state. CI combined with AT is a psychophysical process of letting go of holding physical tension and preconceived notions of where and how to move.

CI Technique Requires Kinesthetic Consciousness

AT teachers work with students to first become aware of their ‘unreliable sensory awareness’ due to habitual misuse and then provide a more accurate sensory awareness of our underlying efficient movement or “primary control” (Gelb). Paxton observes the continual challenge in CI to reject familiar pathways, which are deeply ingrained in the nervous system, and requires conscious discipline (2001, 425). Sinclair has observed that dancers typically, “tense-up, over-effort and push through” both muscularly and mentally when encountering an unfamiliar movement. AT is an embodied combination to alter habitual pathways for expanding our way of seeing, thinking, and hearing.

Johnson believes that we need to become more conscious of our thoughts to understand our movement habits. Specific techniques drawn from AT, Laban, Bartenieff, physics, and science frame her teaching. Johnson refers to Alexander’s theory of “unreliable sensory awareness”. AT teachers work with students to provide a more accurate sensory awareness of how their bodies move efficiently. “Alexander found that habitual misuse adversely affected the reliability of his kinesthetic sense...” (Gelb 52). In “Theorizing Off-Balance”, Johnson addresses

the problems with current movement training for actors that continues to focus on reproducing and imitating movements. She notes that lack of conscious kinesthetic awareness and cognitive knowledge of physics in movement training, reduces our ability to organize in relation to gravity (11). In a CI class, Johnson teaches the mental and physical skills involved to slide across the floor.^{xxxviii} While sitting on the floor Johnson pressed her hands and feet into the floor with strong weight to slightly rise into the vertical space, and then with quickening time initiated with her core, by tossing her pelvis forward with 3D shaping, spiraling to land on her front. Johnson observes that if your muscles are “gripping” you will either not be able to access momentum to move yourself through space and/or you will have “less control and awareness of the next available choice for movement” (*ibid*). Johnson finds there is a continual need for dancers to train a “kinaesthetic experience and relationship to gravity with one's own body before having to navigate it with someone else”.^{xxxix} In partners, Johnson taught us a slow progression to sharing weight by having each partner lean forward to the other. Noticing where we were resisting momentum became necessary to be able to share our full weight between each other. Referring to Alexander’s theory of “unreliable sensory awareness”, in the interview she notes there is often a disconnection between how something feels and looks. In our previous choreographic work together, she asked us to journal our thoughts as she found in our rehearsal discussions there was disconnect between how something felt and looked. Johnson explains that to understand our movement habits, we need to become more conscious of our thoughts. The technical skills involved in kinaesthetically experiencing off-balance is the, “question of engaging and developing imagination” (13). AT sharpens her ability to observe and change movement habits and impulses psychophysically.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ethnographic Ethics Intersect with Embodied Observation

Sociocultural and psychophysical experiences influence perception and learning while dancing. Danielle Robinson, dance historiographer, argues that structured improvisation inherently leads to fluid and individual interpretations by each dancer (21). Robinson's argument challenges the positivist, objective scientific perspective that dance needs to be viewed as a reproducible, unchanging physical expression, removed from individual identity. Dance scholarship is rooted in the knowledge that movement is inevitably linked to thought and culture (Foster). My movement choices while improvising are embedded in my cultural history.

Bryant includes the AT practice of observing oneself and the space around before formulating choreographic material. She chooses to start a choreographic process without 'pre-scripting', by observing the physical movement preferences of each dancer but also the interpersonal dynamics of the group. In July 2015 at *Earthdance*'s dance residency,^{x1} *aLOFT* dancers/choreographers were a more diverse group in terms of levels of experience and gender. She commented on how the power dynamics of the group influenced the physical choices dancers were making at *Earthdance*, tentativeness for some dancers to lead and resistance for some dancers to follow others. Keith Johnstone believes that while improvising "your innermost self will be revealed." (111). Aware of our habitual group dynamics, in our December 2015 intensive Bryant decided to focus on soloing within the ensemble in the hopes of interrupting our preferred choices. Major shifts in my role within the ensemble resulted in me soloing more often and longer in duration than previous times. In addition to Bryant's focus on soloing, I also

believe my confidence with soloing is attributed to being the most senior member in the research in December, as opposed to being one of the least senior dancers at *Earthdance*. Robinson reveals that researching dance forms can expose societal desire to differentiate each other according to ethnicity, gender, and social class, etc. (23). The idea of personal choice is challenged through critical discourse analysis, which studies how inequality and power abuse are re-enacted through talk and text. In relation to dance, Robinson identifies that choices are continually made consciously and subconsciously by individuals while dancing. As an improviser I become more aware of my agency to choose to reinforce, reverse, and transcend assumed roles while dancing.

In Tokyo, the other guest teacher Bogdanovski and I experienced the majority of the students having exceptional concentration and movement skills. I interpreted their focus and skill to demonstrate their comprehension of the material. Yet, some of the students' questions on the first day clearly indicated I needed to be clearer with my key teaching concepts and specifically my overall interest to include soloing within the typical duet form of CI. Limited by not speaking Japanese, I knew that I was not fully understanding the dancers' kinesthetic, emotional, and cultural nuances. Unaware of the dancers' previous training and personal challenges, unlike several of the organizers, on the first day in Tokyo, I came in with the assumption that the students in Japan would struggle with soloing as I have. The first solo exploration I taught was sensory-based and more internally driven. Some of the organizers and I felt it was not as successful as the exercises that followed. Maaya Fukumoto, organizer and performer with C.I.N.N. since 2005 and a scholar in Japan on CI, commented that the solo exercise on the first day seemed too slow and she felt that the dancers needed to be more challenged.^{xli} I decided that

the best way to connect more deeply with the students would be by witnessing, dancing and, most significantly, by talking with them.

Teaching Somatics Spontaneously

Dance is the manifestation of thinking in action, revealing our current consciousness as well as our history and hopes for the future. Dance historians like Shelley Berg rationalize that to develop valuable dance ethnography, researchers need to draw from multiple sources to describe and reinterpret the relationship between the past and present (1999, 225). Susan Napier, Japanese anime scholar, argues that the Japanese culture values visual aesthetics more than European and American values (21). From an AT perspective, broadening the ‘field of awareness’ allows somatic teachers to make in-the-moment decisions to more readily attend to the needs of the group. In my case, it was to understand how culture and history may or may not influence individual students in Japan while accessing more of their visual senses.

The CI teaching aesthetic encourages students to not physically copy the teacher and for this reason I have been resistant to physically demonstrate for students. Helen Thomas briefly discusses how teaching CI is remarkably different from teaching more traditional dance forms like Ballet. She explains that the CI teacher is viewed more as a facilitator than as a “master” (105). Thomas rationalizes that the teaching role is directly related to the form of CI itself, where there is more attention given to the dancer’s individual, internal body experience in relationship to another, rather than focusing on copying specific shapes in space. Thomas’ book is not solely focused on CI, unlike my research, and she is speaking more generally about the CI aesthetic in her work. I would echo that my role as a CI teacher is significantly different than a Ballet teacher, and yet each particular student body will require a unique pedagogical approach.

A comparative assessment of kinesthetic learning over visual learning is not an embodied pedagogical approach. As a somatic dance educator, the challenge for myself and my students is to not hierarchize learning styles by favouring one over another. My goal as a teacher is to utilize multiple learning styles simultaneously. Some scholars, such as William Tsutsui, rationalize the visual preference for Japanese people is because of the Japanese writing system, originating from China, based on ideograms and pictograms (Tsutsui 24). Historically and culturally Japanese students may be more familiar with visual learning. Howard Gardner developed the theory of multiple intelligences to broaden the definition of intelligence from various modalities: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Gardner argues against labelling learners into one category and instead encourages educators to recognize the fluidity of intelligence influenced by specific cultural values. An intelligence is, “a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture” (Gardner 33-34). Working with AT, in Japan I consciously drew on the students’ assumed visual learning preference but informed with their whole selves. Marjorie Barstow, the first teacher to graduate in F.M. Alexander’s teacher training in 1934, developed a method for teaching group classes in AT (Brenner).

“A group setting provides a real opportunity to develop one’s power of observation, a skill which was essential to Alexander’s discovery of the Technique. Many pupils find that they are better able to recognize and inhibit their own patterns of misuse after seeing them in others” (Gelb 153).

The information shared becomes an embodied exchange, where the student attends to inner sensations, while observing others. Somatic educators work to include multiple learning styles to deepen knowledge.

Sakiko Ishitsubo discusses her pedagogical approach informed by AT. She said that she did not want to default into teaching her familiar material in Tokyo.

“I didn’t want to prepare in a concrete way, to tell them what AT is and do my sequence, especially because I am new to the community. I first want to learn and experience what they were doing and try to find out how I can connect”.^{xlii}

She explains that the AT practice of ‘non-doing’ helps her to interact with people and respond to them in-the-moment. ‘Non-doing’ enables self-observation while observing others from a whole body perspective: emotionally, socially and cognitively. Practicing ‘non-doing’ discourages analysing people into isolated parts and making stereotypical conclusions. Writing self-reflexively about my changing role as a teacher in Japan adds dimension to surface views around CI teaching in the hopes of encouraging other teachers to diversify their styles according to the situation. Extending Thomas’s analysis of the CI teaching aesthetic, being able to spontaneously adapt my teaching style is a pedagogical teaching approach of somatic practices.

Clear Questioning Challenges Stereotypical Conclusions

Dance and somatic scholars theorize that the way people think affects the way they move. Conversely, the way they move affects the way they think. Anthropologist Brenda Farnell, one of several authors in Buckland’s book, draws on semasiology to theorize that how we talk is integral to how we move. She concludes that observation and personal participation are necessary to research dance but to fully understand a dancer’s movement we also need to talk to the dancers. I began to work more collaboratively with the students and organizers by talking (through my interpreter and with some people who spoke English) and dancing with them before, during and after the classes. On the second day in Japan, I asked my interpreter, Nagai, questions while the students were exploring different exercises in class. “Can you tell me if they

seem engaged, nervous, or tired? Do you think they need more or less time for this exercise?”^{xliii} Often her answers matched my observations and then she would add in more detail that helped me to refine my material for the particular group. In general, I noticed that as I began to communicate more with the organizers and dancers they were more willing to embrace the material I presented. Self-reflexive ethnographers articulate that we cannot assume we know what people are thinking without talking to them.

A cooperative work model informed my teaching in Japan. Ishitsubo told me in the interview how her cooperative teaching philosophy helped her make stronger connections to the students. She believes that by consciously collaborating with the other teachers facilitates a cooperative work environment as opposed to a competitive work structure. Inspired by Ishitsubo and encouraged by the organizers of C.I.N.N., I incorporated material into my classes from the other two teachers. Ishitsubo reflects, “I think it was helpful for the participants and for me to receive and bring back the work”.^{xliv} Originally Ishitsubo was not included in the final demonstration by the workshop leaders. Ishitsubo said that even though the organizers decided the night before to include her, she noticed herself “pulling back...I was not on the flyer and they were not planning to have me...but I chose to inhibit my natural reaction” (*ibid*). Personally I also felt uncomfortable with sharing my workshop material with an audience. I was conflicted on how to structure a demonstration that was informative while being in relationship with the other teachers and the audience. As the three main teachers, we created a model where we each rotated and invited more and more students to join the demonstration until the audience and students were all dancing. Ishitsubo reflected that instead of feeling intimidated, “it was actually fun...the foundation of the [CI] community is that anything can happen...so I can trust you and the

audience” (*ibid*). The overall flow between the three of us as teachers continued to the end and the organizers commented on how intertwined and connected our work seemed.

On the last day I chose to teach my solo improv exercise I call ‘crazy world’. In ‘crazy world’, one dancer solos within the context of a partner and inspired by the environment visually, physically and audibly. The exercise draws on collective and individual inspiration. The main organizer Takahashi observed that several of the students said they were surprised, “their bodies moved in that way” and were excited to have this new experience.^{xlv} Fukumoto and



Image 13 “Crazy world” solo score. Workshop by Liska in Tokyo, May 2016 Photo by Chieko Naruse.

Takahashi both commented on how my teaching showed that I had experience with a variety of ages and levels of students (*ibid*). On reflection, I believe my teaching was better received after I shifted my stereotypical thinking around their assumed struggles with soloing and facilitated greater complexity in the solo material by combining collective and individual values.

Embodied Compositional Skills Performing CI

Maintaining inner and outer awareness while performing is an ongoing challenge. Fukumoto reflects on how CI as a somatic practice can support the choreographic process. In her article the “The Conception of Improvisation in CI”, she includes a series of in-depth interviews with several key CI initiators such as Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith. She identifies AT through Skinner Releasing Technique (a somatic practice developed by Joan Skinner, a former student of AT), as one of the main somatic influences on CI. In an email exchange Fukumoto speaks of the benefits of using CI to choreograph.

“I believe that CI makes a choreographer ready to find his/her dance through observing the outside world well and also the inside world well...CI can introduce the fact that the field of dance movement has no limit”.^{xlvi}

Accessing inner and outer awareness is essential for somatic practices to translate into performance practices. Fukumoto and C.I.N.N. have had intensive training with Martin. Her ensemble composition training teaches dancers to compose instantaneously by shifting the timing and spatial configurations during an improvisation. Fukumoto expresses the challenge of accessing multiple awareness in an improvised ensemble performance.

“Performing CI with a group of dancers and with the audience, the most difficult and challenging aspect is to keep track of time from the audience’s view, being aware of the inside and also others, being open to the unexpected movements and giving up some parts which I cannot see because of my movements”. (*ibid*)

Reflecting on our performance in Tokyo, Fukumoto said that she was satisfied. “C.I.N.N. members have experienced more and become better CI dancers. So this time, I felt less responsible for the production of the performance than before and it was good” .(*ibid*) Nagai who has been with C.I.N.N. since 2007 commented on being able to trust others more and felt less anxious in the performance this past May.

“In the past few years, I was feeling it was difficult to fully connect with the group... This time, I was feeling comfortable, and enjoyed the moments as they happened. I could go with my instinct. I felt I could receive offers from people which I was rejecting in the past few years, to be supported and create together”.^{xlvi}



Image 14 Nagai, elevated while standing, supported by the ensemble. Performance in Tokyo by C.I.N.N. with guests Bogdanovski and Liska. May 5, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.

Takahashi also reflects on the performance in May. She said that, “Sometimes skin to skin is different with different people, but this time it is very natural...”.^{xlvi} After only stepping in for one performance, I was impressed with their responsive compositional skills as an ensemble. The lines we created as an ensemble in the photographs below are an example of a spatially-focused compositional structure. The second photograph is an example of high technical skills to support a dynamic lift. Nagai stays head-to-head with me while I am being supported by Masato Kunieda and Takahashi. Nagai’s facial expression continues our emotionally-driven thematic connection in our quartet. The general feeling of success among the dancers is attributed to their years of working together, for the knowledge accumulates in each performer adding to the shared knowledge of the group.



Image 15 Performance in Tokyo by C.I.N.N. with guests Bogdanovski and Liska. May 5, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.



Image 16 Performance in Tokyo by C.I.N.N. with guests Bogdanovski and Liska. May 5, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.



Image 17 Performance in Tokyo by C.I.N.N. with guests Bogdanovski and Liska. May 5, 2016. Photo by Chieko Naruse.

Somatics in the Choreographic Process

As with C.I.N.N., *aLOFT*'s ensemble improv skills have been influenced by Martin. Martin developed *Ensemble Thinking* which is a training system to perform solo, duet, and ensemble improvisations.

“Ensemble Thinking enables the performer to produce clear choices and avoid the bane of improvisation: ‘mush’ (when there are no primary compositional concerns being articulated/recognized by the group, and complexity overwhelms everyone’s efforts)”. (10).

Inspired by Martin, I created a score which required the dancers to engage physically, emotionally and rhythmically within a specific theme. To emotionally embody the concept I used a theatre-based exercise called “Buses and Pedestrians” that literally requires the dancers to

chase and be chased by each other. I asked the dancers to reflect emotionally on the experience in the different roles and asked them to experiment with finding pleasure and fear in either role. To facilitate more emotional expression from the dancers I chose to share some memories that were guiding my choreographic choices of being in the *Raging Asian Women (RAW)* Taiko Drumming collective.^{xlix} I explained that the piece physicalizes the challenge and support of a group, and simultaneously reveals the pleasure and fear of being an individual within the group. I



Image 18 Burgess solos with aLOFT dancers, photo by Olya Glotka, June 24, 2016.

narrowed their movement choices by asking the dancers to only choose movement from their solo material which we had developed on the first rehearsal. The photograph is of Madison Burgess soloing, expressing both her vulnerability and strength, while the other dancers' prepare to "over-take" her expression of independence. While improvising as an ensemble, they were restricted to a rhythmic beat, where one person at a time could occasionally break the rhythm as seen in the photograph below.



Image 19 Johnson solos, contrasting rhythm to the aLOFT dancers. Photo Karen Kaeja June 22, 2016.

In rehearsal, Johnson said that the score allowed for, “lots of choices, but was not infinitely random”.¹ Lee reflected on my process for developing the improv scores.

“Your process was a step-by-step kinesthetic building of knowledge together that informed how we chose to respond... Your process did not dislocate me or make me feel self-conscious in the improv which is good”.^{li}

Drawing on Martin’s work, I created a ‘container’ to limit the endless movement choices available in the hopes of creating compositional clarity, with specific emotional and physical arches.

Clarifying Thinking Enriches Choreographic Process

Ben Spatz in *What A Body Can Do* exposes that there is a belief in acting training and I would say in dance as well, that performers can be ‘neutral’ or ‘empty’ in their thinking and just physically fulfill movement tasks. In contrast, Spatz argues that performers are always thinking and not ‘empty’, and it is the director’s job to clarify their thinking. Madison Burgess, the

youngest and newest member, found the improvised sections the most challenging. She noticed that, “I started to get into my head space, to think ahead and analyze the moment”.^{lii} She said she was the most engaged and least nervous during her pre-choreographed duet and solo section. Burgess articulated some concerns in her journal the day before the showing. “I understand the score and the order, but I do however feel as though I might not fully be embodied with the movement involved in the score”.^{liii} Spatz emphasizes how discussion and reflective notes are essential to support clarity. I wonder how Burgess’s experience could have deepened if I had met with her individually after reading her journal notes on the day before the showing? Restricted by time, I was not able to help clarify her thinking and mostly to reassure her of her already strong choices.

Drawing on AT principles Madden identifies that our conscious thinking interrelates with our action. I incorporated her preliminary questions into each rehearsal to help to clarify my dancers’ intentions and current feelings about the project, as I did previously in the solo investigation with Bryant and working with YDE dancers. I asked the dancers, “Why did you choose to come to rehearsal today? What part of the piece are you more or less interested in? What part of the piece makes you feel excited, bored, anxious, and/or confused? Is there anything you need from me, yourself, and/or the group today to feel more embodied?”^{liv} Through my training in AT I have learned that a clear understanding of personal intention and desire toward action allows for a more coordinated whole body use.

Knowing in advance that C.I.N.N. and *aLOFT* dancers have high levels of skill in ensemble composition, I focused more on the physical/emotional sensation in my fieldwork. I integrated my ‘Tree/Leaf/Wind’ score with Ishitsubo’s AT inspired exercise to explore deepening layers of consciousness. ‘Tree/Leaf/Wind’ is inspired from a Butoh (Japanese

contemporary dance form) exercise taught by Toronto Butoh choreographer and teacher Denise Fujiwara. In ‘Tree/Leaf/Wind’, one dancer responds to the physical pressure from another by either meeting and/or resisting their touch or following the direction of their touch. I asked them to notice their emotional responses while they interacted with each other. I suggested, “Consider when and why in your life do you resist, meet, or follow someone? When and how can resisting someone be both a fear response and also a way to support another”.^{lv} Raising consciousness around their emotional responses while moving deepened the dancers’ total movement expression. Drawing on Ishitsubo’s exercise, while making contact with another person I asked them to first feel their clothes and their partner’s clothes, their skin and their partner’s skin, as well as their muscles and their partner’s muscles. I followed Ishitsubo’s pacing by choosing to



Image 20 “Layers of awareness”, Snapshot from Dance Video, November 2016.

pause and take several minutes of repeating the instructions for people to integrate the material. Slowing down at first can foster a more embodied experience. Next I asked them to feel and imagine their partner’s bones, organs, and fluids and their own moving and being moved by each

other. The last layer is to become conscious of what Ishitsubo calls “heart” or how I interpreted it as “desire”. As I layered “desire” into their consciousness, the dancers commented on feeling stronger emotional connections to their physical experience of resisting and allowing. The dancers’ shared their responses in a group discussion.^{lvi} Lee said, “There were many choices of how to respond...I felt like dancing more”. Burgess noticed that her “touch was longer”. Mika Lior explains that her, “perception was different, less compartmentalized” once I introduced “desire”. Johnson said that the final layer helped her, “step into personal space” as opposed to just a technical exercise. (*ibid.*) To move an improvisational exercise into performance space dancers need to have a balanced inner and outer experience by attending to compositional needs like space and time while also attending to their emotional and sensorial connections. Lior supports Burgess functionally in ‘all-fours’. Lior accesses internal focus to make subtle shifts of weight pushing into the floor with her hands and lower legs, as Burgess uses momentum to fly over her back on the side of her torso. With external focus Lior looks to the side forward while she begins to press more into her right side to shift and lower her torso to eventually help Burgess descend smoothly to the floor. Including desire while moving facilitates an embodied response to an activity, rather than narrowing our movement awareness as either physical or emotional.



Image 21 Lior accessing inner and outer focus to support Burgess. Photo by Karen Kaeja June 22, 2016.



Image 22 Example of internal/external awareness, Lior and Burgess, snapshot from Dance Video, November 2016

In-Depth Interviewing Deepens Choreographic Process

Social anthropologist Jonathan Skinner includes a range of ethnographic interview theories and techniques in *The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach*. Skinner's introductory chapter discusses anthropological and sociological theories on interview ethics and power relations. He stresses how interviewing is an interactive experience rather than just a one-sided event for the purpose of collecting data. As opposed to a quantitative survey, an informal open-ended qualitative interview allows for an exchange of information, where new perspectives can be developed between both people. The information gathered in the interview can shape the final analysis of the fieldwork revealing deeper layers of research through unsuspected answers. Ethnographic interviewing is a creative process, allowing new information to arise by suspending the desire to find quick conclusions.

Dancer, choreographer and writer Jonathan Burrows in *A Choreographer's Handbook* advises choreographers to interview their collaborators to expand choreographic possibilities. He emphasizes the importance for choreographers to continue to ask specific questions to alleviate the pressure of knowing the final piece before it is created. Reflecting and documenting on the process becomes as important as focusing on the final product. Inspired by the dancers' written interpretations of a particular movement, I chose to deepen the investigation and other times I chose to change the movement, finding another way to convey my idea. To expand the dancers' compositional choices, I clarified what I wanted them to be thinking about through discussion and writing. I hoped that through the act of journaling the dancers would better understand their intention in the movement and enhance their overall engagement in the process. Knowing what my dancers are thinking helped me to direct the piece and to understand what components of the piece needed clarification.

The score we named ‘Tensegrity’ required the quintet of dancers to push and pull each other in a continual state of off-balance by transferring their weight slowly and successively toward and away from each other. The ‘Tensegrity’ score layered by the ‘Hollow-Leg’ exercise is shown in the photograph below. The dancers shift their weight on one foot, then place the other foot down on the floor without any weight and slowly transfer their full weight to their other side. ‘Hollow-leg’ or ‘Empty-leg’ is inspired by a Tai Chi exercise, intermixed with somatic principles of AT and CI, using Paxton’s ‘Small Dance’. In this exercise we were simply walking, but slowly. We started by standing with our feet hip distance apart, knees slightly bent and playing with shifting our feet more to the front, back, and then sides of our feet. I asked the dancers to see how they can balance their weight on their feet evenly from front-back and side-side. Then we shifted our weight slowly to one side, without lifting our other foot and then slowly lift one foot off the ground to then place it back down without any weight. Gradually we shifted our weight so we are balanced between both feet and then completely balanced on the other foot. I reminded the dancers to not control their breath but rather allow our involuntary breathing system to organize according to the psychophysical demands on our bodies. I asked the dancers to bring their arms in front of them and experiment with seeing their hands and also use their peripheral vision to see the space around them, and as a result, access both an inner and outer awareness. I provided frequent reminders to soften the tension in their arms, armpits, finger tips, knees and ankle joints, while allowing them to direct their arms and legs to move through space. The exercise teaches how to control the amount of weight they are sharing in a smooth and even tempo. The dancers’ conscious reflections in discussions and their journal notes were an invaluable resource to guide and enrich my step-by-step somatic choreographic process. In the photograph below the dancers are doing the ‘Tensegrity’ score layered by the ‘push-hands’

exercise. One dancer uses her hands and the contact with the floor to sometimes push the other partner away or sometimes invite the other to lean into her torso. This encouraged the dancers to



Image 23 'Tensegrity' and 'Push-Hands' score aLOFT dancers, photo by Karen Kaeja, June 22, 2016

use various body parts, expanding the pushing and pulling dynamics. Drawing on *aLOFT's* previous research with choreographer Bryant, I used the term 'mobile bases' requiring the dancers to never be completely stationary even in supporting roles. Lee asked me to clarify the term 'mobile base' in her writing. She recalls, "Some terms like mobile bases were repeated to us a number of times which makes me think that you need to have a different way of conveying the idea to us".^{lvii} In the next rehearsal, inspired by Lee's suggestion, I knew that I needed to re-teach my idea around 'mobile bases' from a somatic experience rather than just an intellectual concept, as three out of the five dancers were new to the material. I chose to include two different AT and CI exercises both inspired by Tai Chi. More efficient and spontaneous movement resulted as I incorporated developmental movement concepts such as the pushing reflex. Developmental movement expert Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, articulates that the dancers' movement is more

organized when they access their body mode to reflexively push off from the floor with momentum. Johnson reflects on my choice to re-teach ‘Tensegrity’ by layering on somatic exercises, “Going back and doing it in a somatic exercise firmed it into kinesthetic being”.^{lviii} In an interview with Lee she rationalizes her request for clarification of my choreographic terminology. “When you would say things like, remember to include a mobile base I would try to make it happen as soon as you gave us the instruction”.^{lix} Instead, she spoke supportively of the “step-by-step kinesthetic building of knowledge together” to teach the concept of ‘mobile bases’.



Image 24 “Tensegrity and Hollow-Leg” scores. aLOFT dancers, photo by Karen Kaeja, June 22, 2016

CHAPTER FIVE

Research not Training

A choreographic process toward new innovations requires a clear intention while simultaneously being open to the moment-to-moment process. Some theatre scholars have concluded that successful PBR follows a positivist scientific method. Spatz draws on acting scholar Sharon Carnicke to present the problem with viewing PBR from a linear, product-driven model in search of a final truth. Spatz argues that effective research requires specific questions while recognizing the scope of limitations (124). PBR asks not what we know, but what is the process involved for knowing what we know?

What is considered ‘training’ versus ‘research’ is debated in acting literature, but for the scope of this paper I will simply say that ‘training’ draws on techniques/exercises that are easily reproduced. In contrast, ‘research’ involves explorations by individuals adjusting and intermixing personal body memory and history from a variety of practices and it is not necessarily reproducible. *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research* includes a collection of articles by PBR scholar and editor Lynette Hunter and author Ian Watson. Ian Watson, differentiates a PBR approach from a training-based performance approach in “An Actor Prepares: Performance as Research (PAR) in the Theatre”. After reading Watson’s article, I reaffirmed my desire to work with dancers who could draw on years of previous experience in CI and somatic principles. I invited two exceptionally experienced CI choreographers/performers, Pam Johnson and Susan Lee, in my fieldwork with *aLOFT*. I knew that it would be a challenge to negotiate the unfamiliar relationship dynamics with Johnson and Lee who had previously been my choreographers and teachers. On the second day I wrote that, “I struggle with giving direction to Johnson and Lee. Mostly I just love their choices but the truth is that I feel awkward in my role”.^{lx} They both spoke to me after the third rehearsal, noticing my

discomfort and told me to not worry about directing them, rather they were happy to have me make the decisions. In previous processes with *aLOFT* we had a much more ‘collective’ approach, in terms of the choreographic vision and financial expenses. We usually shared the studio costs, administrative duties, and overall creative vision. Any money earned had been mostly to sustain the group and not for dancer fees. Usually one person volunteers to choreograph, with the underlying assumption that each collective member is fueling the choreographic vision. The model has worked successfully for exploring material, yet the open collaborative model has made it a struggle to develop pieces ready for production with limited time. I began on the first day wanting the dancers to be equally involved in the decision-making choreographic process. Yet, when I took a stronger directorial role, the dancers were better able to fulfill my vision. PBR scholarship outlines that having and stating clear intentions as a researcher empowers all the collaborators involved and allows the people being researched to make informed decisions on why and whether they continue to be involved. In my interview with Lee she reflected on past research we did together with *aLOFT* without clear goals. “I felt like I was going through a waterslide. It wasn’t necessarily comfortable and it felt more terrifying”.^{lxi} She explains that when she does not feel prepared she feels more anxious, but in my project Lee felt adequately prepared. To deepen and expand my research I actively included my collaborators in the creative process while continually renewing my goal as a choreographer.

I draw from LMA in my methodology to analyze the dancers’ comments in relation to AT theory in that conscious attention coordinates movement. Laban components can be utilized to analyze and vary habitual movement choices. When analyzed using Laban, as discussed in Chapter Three, CI-based lifts typically include more torso-torso contact as opposed to using

peripheral contact with limbs and fluctuate in timing by using momentum rather than controlled and sustained timing.



Image 25 Liska supporting Tanya Williams using the CI technique of maintaining torso-torso connection. Photo by Vivek Patel. January 2016

Without CI training, the more successful lifts analyzed in terms of accuracy, soft landings, and less muscle strain, feature the flow as bound, the weight as strong, and the space as direct. Most commonly, taller larger framed dancers are the ‘supports’ and the shorter smaller framed dancers the ‘fliers’. In contrast, physical size does not dictate the partnering role in CI inspired lifts. Aesthetics, training, politics, and culture influence our movement choices (Foster) and specifically for my research, influence our physical partnering choices.

Spatz recounts that there has been a long tradition in theatre to find new material by combining physical disciplines. He reminds us that conducting research does not only entail

combining but we need to consider what level of training and knowledge exists at the point of interaction (146). “Only with competence in both fields can this intersection be explored, leading to an area of technique that may indeed be historically unprecedented” (146). I had gathered a highly skilled team of dancers specialized in CI, most who have years of experience and some who train on a regular basis in CI. I assumed they would include high-flying lifts in the improv scores but more lower-flying lifts were favored. Johnson and Zita Nyarady defaulted into the support roles which limited my overall artistic vision. The dancers both confided in their disappointment of feeling burdened in these roles. I realized that without months of regular rehearsals together, the only way to include high-flying lifts would be to pre-set them; yet I was stuck in a pre-determined idea that most of the dancers were not wanting to execute set choreographed lifts. After discussing my concerns with the dancers, I was surprised to hear the opposite response and instead they encouraged me to create a completely choreographed ‘big lift’ section in the piece. The dancers responded with enthusiasm and many of them commented on how enjoyable and successful that section was. Looking back I would have liked to take more time developing the ‘big lift’ section, as most of the lifts had already been discovered by me and/or other dancers before. Spatz continues by saying that rather than focus on finding new knowledge we need to focus on re-discovering old knowledge by integrating disciplines. I was committed to having the work also be research rather than just training and looked for what was new in the familiar lifts.

I collaborated with the most experienced dancers, Johnson and Lee, to work on the technique of making the lifts even more dynamic and effortless. Pam Johnson and Susan Lee synchronize their physical timing, shifting weight, and reaching into space to use momentum effortlessly. Johnson’s arms are secondary to her torso connection that shapes to support Lee’s

lift; with quick timing she lowers her pelvis underneath Lee's centre to elevate Lee on a backward diagonal. Lee pushes her feet off from the floor to send herself backward and up toward Johnson, drawing on naval radiation to reach her limbs with counter-tension into space. I added in multiple partners to expand the typical duet form, experimenting with trio, quartet and quintet supported throws and catches in the air. I was inspired by the narrative I had developed around the politics of collectives to have the 'big lift' section express the ultimate functioning of the group, as opposed to the dysfunction I intended to express in some of the solo sections.



Image 26 Johnson lifting Lee. Photo by Olya Glotka, June 24, 2016.



Image 27 Burgess lifting Lior with aLOFT dancers compositionally framing the duet. Photo by Karen Kaeja June 22, 2016.



Image 28 'Big lift' with Lee and aLOFT dancers, photo by Olya Glotka, June 24, 2016.

Lee first flies on Nyarady supported on the side of her torso while one leg is suspended to counter-balance her weight. I changed the route of descent on the lifts where Johnson gives Lee a

momentum nudge which sends Lee head first toward Lior and Burgess. The new discoveries in the otherwise familiar lifts were a combination of my choice to consecutively add somatic elements to our rehearsals each day and also the intelligence of the dancers to kinesthetically integrate the information.

Especially when using improvisation, it becomes essential as a choreographer to create a collaborative working environment where the dancers can become invested in the work on multiple levels. Through physical exploration the narrative became clearer and I shared my piece description. I started with “Locked in. Shifts” for the title in June. I was never fully convinced of the title and I changed the title to “Tensegrity” in March 2017, inspired by my dancers and Choreographer Twyla Tharp in *The Creative Habit*. Tharp provides seven practical exercises to change the way we think about the work we are creating. In one of them she suggests we examine the linguistic roots of words (Tharp, 159). In a rehearsal with my dancers in March, Torres asked me what the word tensegrity means in the context of our movement. The question inspired me to study the word more thoroughly. While researching the word, I realized that my theme was an effort to embody the word. Several somatic teachers use the word “Tensegrity”, first coined by Kenneth Snelson’s in his sculptures. “The shape is maintained not by rigid joints but by a balance of tension across the entire structure” (Finch, “Tensegrity”).

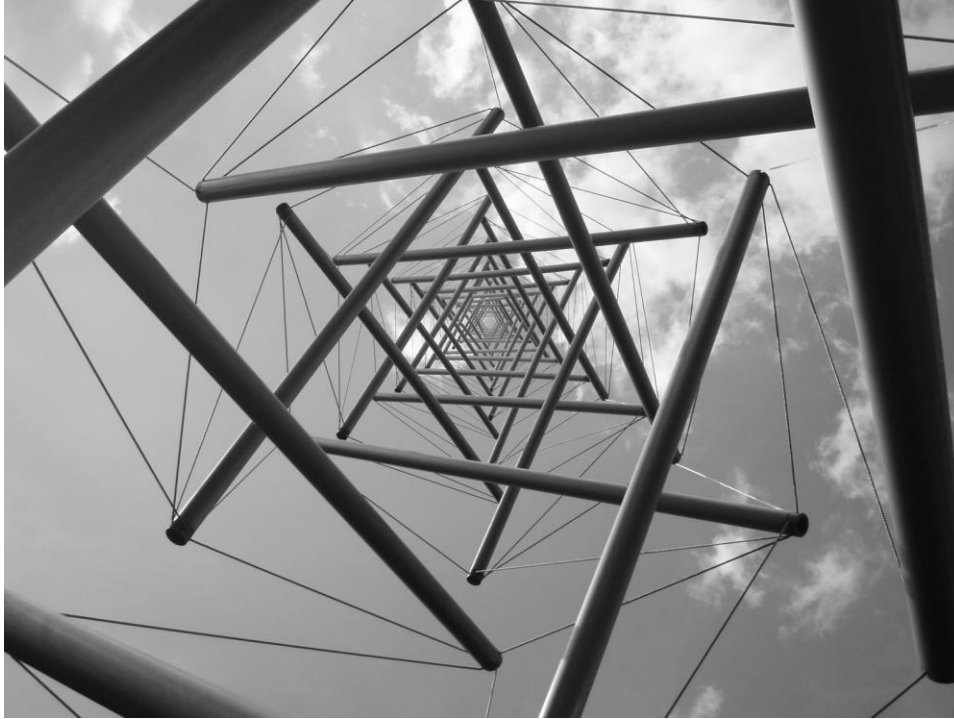


Image 29 Kenneth Snelson's Needle Tower II by Kenneth Snelson (1969) at the Kröller-Müller Museum in Netherlands

Most significant to my piece, is the understanding of 'Tensegrity' as an optimal functioning structure has equal amount of pulls on all sides. When there is an imbalance the structure collapses.

In my work, the definition of tensegrity is expressed both physically and emotionally.

"Contours of distance and intimacy, constriction and ease take shape through gestures that flow from and influence one another. Together, a group explores the fear and pleasure of interdependency, examining what it means for an individual to be a part of generating something more than any one person could create. Organic, elemental, and charged with the raw power of bodies in movement at once determined and innate, this piece reflects what it means to be diverse in community, with all the hopes for and fears about human connection that sociality entails".^{lxii}

Delving into my personal historical and emotional experiences driving my choreographic decisions, helped me move beyond the technical components and engage the dancers to develop movement material with more emotional and cultural significance. Toward the end of the March research, sections of the piece represent more of an embodiment of playing Taiko, rather than just the emotional/social memories of working in a collective. In one part, we shout out using

‘kiyas’ to offer verbal and emotional support to each other. Integrating the narrative of my piece opened up opportunities to research new movement material.

While preparing for my most recent showing in March of 2017, I had to resist my habit of ‘end-gaining’. In AT terms, ‘end-gaining’ means to fixate on the final goal and as a result, lose awareness of what is happening in the moment. On the second rehearsal, I wanted to create the pre-set sequences right away so that the dancers had enough time to embody the movement. We rehearsed the ‘big lift’ section which I had developed in June of 2016, but taught the lifts out of context of the original improvised score. I felt disconnected to the movement and defaulted into a more instructional role than a choreographic and dancing role. Torres reflects on learning the lift section, “I am not sure about the content relating to the physicality”.^{lxiii} By ‘end-gaining’ and rushing toward my end-goal, I missed the essential step-by-step somatic process that had inspired the initial section in June. Gelb defines end-gaining: “Alexander found that most of us let our immediate goals dominate our field of attention; he called this ‘endgaining’ or the ‘one brain track’ method” (Gelb 80). Instead of ‘end-gaining’, working with the AT principles helps to recover a whole body response to an activity and in doing so, better overall use of an individual, coined as the ‘means-whereby’.

I had so many hopes and dreams for the piece I was creating. I realized that I was jumping ahead of myself for the March presentation and was already imagining my piece in full production mode. I worked with the AT principles to inhibit my desire to ‘endgain’. In the process of working with the principles, I reminded myself of the importance of having perspective of the reality that I had only five rehearsals with my dancers. On the third rehearsal I chose to return to the somatically-driven improvised scores before working on the ‘big lift’



Image 30 “Big Lift” section, snapshot of video documentation by Liska February 2017.



Image 31 “Big Lift” section, snapshot of video documentation by Hannah Schallert March 2017.

section. I was able to recover the depth behind the opening score that we named ‘lava lamp’. I worked with the CI score I call ‘reaching up and out’, where the over-dancer (flier) is physically

above the under-dancer (support) and slowly lifts her/his torso away from the other dancer, directing her/his torso to the space up and around. The under-dancer's task is to rise up to physically maintain contact with the other dancer. The task for both dancers is to maintain relative torso-torso connection while rising and descending from very low to mid kinesphere levels in space. I also added on Ishitsubo's layers of awareness exercise (described in Chapter four, awareness of skin-muscle...desire). Torres commented on the importance of clarifying the specific tasks in the improvised scores,

“As the focus of the work is the experience within, taking the time to allow the task to be clear is fundamental. As the parameters became more and more specific, allowing the natural response to emerge becomes more accessible”.^{lxiv}

Reflecting on Torres' journal notes, I know that I still need to clarify for my dancers that the work is not just internal. In his last journal reflection just before we presented the piece, Torres asks, “How do we create conditions for the emotional content to emerge” What's the role of the choreographer within this challenge? What's the performers'?” (*ibid.*) I believe that through more discussion and with AT hands-on-work, the dancers will make stronger and lasting psychophysical connections.

CONCLUSION

Research versus Training: Personal, Political and Historical

Underlying the differences of training versus research exposes the continual struggle for dance research to be valued within academic and arts funding bodies. Lynette Hunter in “Valuing Performance/Practice as Academic Knowledge” frames her analysis of performance-as-research from a historical perspective. She recounts that, “...the arts were introduced into education through conservatory systems which trained for the profession and did not focus on research” (203). My motivation for researching with *aLOFT* was to create a work-in-progress piece for the stage, as requested by the current members. Lior and Nyarady confirm that in this project they did not have to handle administrative concerns (organizing schedules, booking space, paying for studio) in comparison to other research with *aLOFT*. Without administrative responsibilities, they reveal that they had more time and energy to focus more clearly and successfully on their role as dancers. Hunter identifies that the ongoing lack of adequate resources and funding in academia and art councils limits the ability to conduct serious research in the arts. External pressure to have a finished reproducible product in order to continue to research feeds into financial pressure from product-gearred funding models.

Academia’s historical view of the arts as primarily a training tool and not as research continues to have an impact today. Working with human bodies depends on satisfactory spaces and funds. The financial vulnerability of artists escalates the personal pressure to seek external recognition for our work. Discovering new work depends on the logistics of time and money from the government and our communities. Nyarady comments on the tension between ongoing investigations versus product oriented work. “*aLOFT* needs to find the balance between having more freedom in rehearsals and yet working within the confines of the system”.^{lxv} She reflects on

previous work with *aLOFT* saying that the work was amazing for exploring and creating, “yet the videos we have don’t show that” (*ibid*). In contrast Nyarady said that my piece,

“...came with a clear intention, still improv but a combination of set choreography with clear tasks throughout....I told people about the showing and said it might be good. I rarely have that much confidence in a piece at this stage. I’ve liked coming into the room and being super focused on the task for three hours”.^{lxvi}

Accessing funding is a beginning for artists to have the confidence, patience and determination to consciously hold off the product-driven pressure on themselves and their collaborators.

When Is Performance Research?

Sharing the work outside of the immediate creators of the work is necessary to invest in serious research. Receiving ongoing and diverse feedback from the dancers, outside eyes/mentors, and audience reminded me of the value in working collaboratively to deepen my investigation and also the challenge of attending to my overall vision. Hunter emphasizes the invaluable role of peer feedback in the research process. She argues that the crucial feedback process in artistic research is comparable to the testing of experiments by scientists in the natural world (204). Sharing the draft version of my thesis with my informants to validate and/or correct how I have quoted and analyzed them strengthened my research. In addition to Karen Kaeja as an outside eye in the June research, I invited several other long-time friends, mostly non-dancers, to provide feedback and offer a broader perspective, beyond contemporary dance aesthetics. They asked me surprising questions and offered new ways for me to view the material. I was reminded of the value in working collaboratively and also the challenge of being open to the influence of others while attending to my overall vision.

As performers we are hungry to share our work because another layer of discovery unfolds when the work is witnessed by peers and the general audience. In the final showing of

our piece, the dancers' overall engagement with the work was significantly higher than in the rehearsal mode. Lior shares her thoughts on performance.

“I am interested in the energy of performance and how the work deepens in performance...when the world of the piece really lives inside. Rehearsal is so much about building a world but in performance you inhabit the world. The audience, as witness, changes how we operate in it”.^{lxvii}

The other dancers agreed that they would want to perform the piece in a production with a rehearsal process that included dramaturgical and technical support.^{lxviii}

Self-reflexive ethnographic scholarship emphasizes that including informants in the work by having them collaborate on the analysis helps to validate the work as research (Buckland). Deepening layers of meaning reveal themselves as the dancers transform from rehearsal mode into performance mode to understand the limits and expanse of the dance research. Controversy on whether CI pieces are valuable as performance was evident among the dancers in Japan and *aLOFT*. Johnson explains,

“In terms of going into the studio, I could do that forever. I was very happy to do the final presentation, it was very useful. For the piece to be ready for performance you would have to transform it beyond movement. I would want to know what the piece is about...I want to know what's making us charge people money”.^{lxix}

Johnson believes dance pieces that include multi-media, a political message, and narrative are more conducive to staged performances. Practice-based-researchers emphasize that a performer's knowledge accumulates and builds from our past work which influences our current research and in turn fuels our future research. Johnson and I both felt an improv that we performed together just after the June research on July 10, 2016 for a studio opening was a successful dance performance. The piece was completely improvised, non-narrative, and without multi-media. We were not able to find time to physically rehearse and only shared some emails about possible scores to use. An hour prior to our performance we spoke in detail about the kinesthetic and

compositional components we were wanting to elicit in the improvisation. Johnson reflects on why our improvisation was more successful and ready for performance than the research with *aLOFT*. She explains that for the *aLOFT* piece to be performance ready I would need to answer, “Why would it be performed? Who is the audience?”^{lxx} She argues that the success behind our improvised duet was that our intentions for performance were clear. Even though we had no rehearsal process directly connected to our CI piece, I have been researching with Johnson both informally at the weekly jams and formally into production for over ten years. I was drawing on our previous history together to be able to follow her technical kinesthetic cues and aesthetic suggestions during the performance. We reflected that our years of common vocabulary allowed us to execute two off-balance high suspended lifts that would realistically take months if ever to reproduce. I feel conflicted on whether my fieldwork has value as PBR or whether it is only valuable as studio research.

The above interview/discussion with Johnson was conducted via Skype. The intimacy and confidence I had felt was definitely less than when I interviewed her in my home. I was left with a sense of disappointment and confusion. I notice that I interpreted many of her comments in a negative way, or perhaps in my first interview I was wrapped up in my own excitement and misunderstood her words. I have since asked Johnson clarifying questions in person and my understanding of her perspective altered, yet I know there is value in exposing what I interpreted as her critical view on my piece and contemporary dance in general. My hope is that with the support of arts councils, I will be able to transform the piece into production by accessing the necessary resources to provide more studio time, mentoring/dramaturgical support, and a technical crew. The intention to share the work outside of the immediate creators gives a broader context and depth to the work.

Renewing my overall goal for the piece was integral to avoid the trap of creating endless disconnected material. Tharp outlines the importance of defining what she calls your “spine” while creating. She explains, “The spine is the statement you make to yourself outlining your intentions for the work” (Tharp, 142). Comparable to AT theories around the importance of clarifying our goals and desires (see Chapter 2, Historical Overview of AT and Dance), I continued to clarify why I wanted to pursue an MFA, which has a presentational component, as opposed to the MA. I felt unfinished after completing my June research and dance video re-creation. Without adequate funding for the dancers and outside mentorship, I knew I would not be able to revisit the work for months or years to come and I assumed that I may lose most of my initial material. Even though I was not able to take the piece into full production, the opportunity to revisit the material, with the support from the Dance Department, moved me closer to my goal. My goal for this short process was to have a clear video of the first draft of the work to apply to the Arts Councils to further develop the piece for production. Tharp emphasizes the importance of relating the work back to the initial idea.

“The sheer pleasure of working in the studio introduces the temptation to linger, to fall in love with the process of creation rather than driving toward the end product. Take this sort of thing to an extreme and you’ll never finish anything” (152).

Reminding myself of my goals, I came to the conclusion that although I love the process of creating, I needed to draw primarily from June research if I wanted to show a more-developed piece.

Having informants that are equally motivated to build connections in the hopes of future collaborations allows for more intimacy and depth of inquiry. Ethnographers, as well as PBR scholars, argue that conducting research with the intention of giving back to the community studied leads to stronger work (Buckland). Hiring dancers for such a short period of time with

little advance notice is physically and emotionally demanding for all involved. I know that as a dancer, I generally have more investment in the material if there is a possibility for future work. My dancers' psychophysical commitment and level of professionalism were necessary factors to deepen the work.

After the work in June, I realized that it was necessary for all the dancers to have high levels of skills as both fliers and supports to fulfill the technical and also thematic aspects of the work. In addition to Lee, who is an experienced CI dancer, I included two men in the piece who regularly train in CI and are confident as supports and fliers. Lee commented on several occasions how the physical movement in March compared to June was much more dynamic and involved greater risk in terms of being off-balance with longer suspended lifts. As a dancer in the piece this time, compared to only being the choreographer in June, I was directing much more kinaesthetically, as well as verbally. In the March piece, I noticed that the dancers asked more questions and offered more suggestions than in the June work. Being a co-dancer in my own choreography interrupts the traditional observer role and power imbalances inherent between the researcher and researched, as described by self-reflexive ethnographers (see Chapter One). After the fourth rehearsal I remember not knowing how to end the piece and I turned to the dancers and invited their ideas. Their roles shifted as both dancers and co-creators, as I offered them more decision-making power. Barbier reflects on my way of choreographing. "Suzanne's leadership/creative/choreographic style was inviting, inclusive, experiential and educational".^{lxxi} He also speaks of the difficulty of our random rehearsal schedule where the five rehearsals were spaced out over four weeks and as a result I had to leave extra time for the dancers to review the material from sometimes even a week before. Barbier explains that the rehearsal process was, "malleable, non-fixed, which led to a bit of disengagement in between rehearsals as it felt like a

blank slate each time...building upon the pieces that were selected for deeper work”. (*ibid*). The rehearsal schedule was not ideal. Only Lee was available from my June research and as a result I felt like I was starting anew. For the March piece, I had less than one month to gather a new group of dancers and create a schedule with independent dance artists who are balancing various jobs to sustain themselves. I was open to new themes and physical scores that might arise in the March process. What I had not realized was how the June research was still very much alive in me. I had a chance to create a dance video of a re-creation of the work in November 2016. The rehearsal and shooting process was only three hours but I spent hours editing the video with Farivash Babanorouzi. New to creating video, I had not fully comprehended how similar the studio choreographic process is to the editing suite. Although a substantial gap of time existed between each project, the work was incubating in me during the video editing project. As I began rehearsals for the March presentation, I was reassured of my already clear theme flushed out in June and re-worked in the dance video.

My personal memories of Taiko drumming inspired my work and were further developed with the support from my outside eyes in the March piece. I knew there was not enough time in March, compared to the June research, to develop individual solo phrases for each dancer. I chose to only co-create solos for Lee, who drew on her solo material from June, and Torres. Patrick Alcedo, my advisor and outside eye, is a dance ethnographer/film maker. He asked challenging questions on my choice to use Taiko music. He reminded me to put the attention on the dancers’ moving bodies and not just on the music.^{lxxii} Choreographer and dance scholar Susan Cash, as an outside eye, agreed that the music was a distraction. She suggested I begin the piece in silence and take longer to rise and descend while in continual physical contact as a group for the opening section.^{lxxiii} Questioning my choice to use Taiko music, my outside eyes

pushed me to realize that Torres' solo is an embodiment of playing the Odaiko (big drum). Typically the oldest and most experienced person in the group will play an improvised solo on the Odaiko, usually wearing only a loin cloth, in my piece he wore just pants and as a group we removed his shirt on stage. The Odaiko solo is a demonstration of skill and test of endurance. Cash shared her impressions of Torres' solo. She explained that his solo seems very internally-driven and he seems to be expressing an outer-body experience. I was reminded of the mask and movement work that my Taiko group would include, we drew on Japanese myths to create the semi-ritualistic narrative based pieces. Through Cash's observations, I realized that I was definitely wanting Torres to engage in a trans-like state and knew I needed to emphasize this further by including the whole group. Clarifying my back-story helped me to explain to the other dancers that, unlike what some of them interpreted, we were not 'attacking' Torres as we physically surround him and shout out 'kiyas'. In contrast, as a group we were supporting his transcendence through a test of endurance. My outside eyes encouraged me to draw inspiration from my theme and allow for ambiguity in the relationships between the dancers, rather than pre-determine them. Torres' emotional role as a soloist could express both the freedom and the fear of expressing his individuality. The final duet with Barbier could express their friendship, love, and/or anger. Having flexible interpretations reminded me that the negotiation and changing nature of the dancers interpretation of their interactions is an essential component of the work. I invited the dancers to allow themselves to discover and be open to the moment-to-moment experience while dancing. Cash helped me identify clearer transitions between the sections by relating the work to my theme. She questioned why, in relationship to my theme, were the other dancers exiting the space during Lee's solo. The dancers and my outside eyes all agreed that the transitions seemed

arbitrary and the dancers needed to have clearer emotional intentions for exiting or entering. Both Cash and Alcedo suggested I have the dancers stay in the space the entire time, to link back to my main theme around the struggles and pleasures of collectivity. The dancers commented that the multiple physical and emotional layers of the scores allowed them to dive into the material for extended periods of time. Barbier reflects after our March presentation in his journal notes. “I could do the piece many times over and keep discovering interests in different parts, through the levels of awareness and performativity”.^{lxxiv} Moving forward I know that I still want to refine and develop the transitions between the sections both thematically and physically. I hope that having an extended rehearsal period will allow for greater clarity and depth.



Image 32 Torres' solo framed by dancers shouting 'kiyas', snapshot from presentation, March 2017



Image 33 Torres' solo framed by dancers shouting 'kiyas', snapshot from presentation, March 2017



Image 34 "Final duet", Barbier and Torres, snapshot of video documentation Liska February 2017.



Image 35 "Final duet by Torres and Barbier, snapshot from presentation, March 2017

Intersecting theoretical and methodological studies of PBR, ethnographic, and dance studies to that of the somatic practices of CI and AT demonstrates a new methodology in dance research. My methodology expands psychophysical coordination in order to facilitate multiple internal/external awareness necessary in choreographic research. Having specific questions to guide my inquiries, and recognizing my limitations by exposing contradictions rather than a polished final truth, was essential to deepen my investigations. Developing realistic goals during each step in the research process, was necessary to avoid an endless abyss of information gathering, which can become both self-indulgent and never-ending. My work emphasized the importance of searching and re-searching with desire. Desire to me is the key word and a reminder that my research cannot be about passionless investigations. Continually clarifying my desire is pertinent toward meaningful and ethical dance research for the researcher, collaborators and the perceived or actual audience. Conducting embodied research means finding the balance between aiming for a final goal while attending to the psychophysical moment-to-moment

process. Combining ethnographic and PBR theory with somatic practices offers an embodied methodology for dance researchers to discover the unknown.

End Notes

ⁱ *Flightworks* is a contemporary dance company established in 2006, by Suzanne Liska and Diana Rose, presenting theatrical partner based work, in site-specific and traditional spaces. Our vision is to perform artistic work that inspires emotion, and provokes thought with images that have lasting resonance. Physically, we are interested in presenting work that highlights lifts that capture and expand the boundaries of momentum and partnering.

ⁱⁱ *aLOFT* is a Toronto and L.A. CI dance company I co-founded with Karen Kaeja. The dance collective is a platform for research and performance of CI Dance and an investigation of the complexities of human relations, through real in-the-moment connections. We are long time performers of dance improvisation, who have extensive choreographic/ performance/ academic/ teaching careers. We celebrate our diversity in in both our experience, dance style and range of ages (27-60 years). We have researched and performed with many guest dancers including Yves Candau (Vancouver), Laura Hicks (Vancouver), Pam Johnson (Toronto), Catherine Lessard (Montreal), Kousha Nakhaei (Toronto), Abhilash Ningappa (India), Eryn Dace Trudell (Montreal), Benno Voorham (Sweden), and Tom Young (Toronto). www.aLOFTproject.com

ⁱⁱⁱ Drawn to the communicative aspect of CI Improvisation, NPO C.I.N.N. (formally SPIRAL) was founded in 2003 for the promotion of CI Improvisation by dancers of Kanto area in Japan. It has been organising CI jams and performances in Tokyo, while also working on numerous projects with CI improvisers from Europe and the Americas. "Tokyo CI Improvisation Festival" was launched in May 2007 with the help of university staffs, teachers, and CI instructors, all who supported the project. C.I.N.N. has continued to organise this annual festival ever since, in which it invites two CI instructors from abroad to lead the workshops and present a CI performance.

^{iv} Susan Sinclair has taught the Pilates Method for twenty-six years and AT for twenty-two years. Susan maintains a private practice in both techniques AT her fully equipped studio in downtown Toronto, and has directed the Sinclair Studio AT Teacher Training Program since 2003. Susan has presented her work AT the Eighth and Ninth International Congresses of the F. M. AT in Lugano, Switzerland; as well as presenting to teachers of the Technique in Europe and the USA, In addition to her work AT her Studio, Susan is a faculty member AT the Houston School for AT and the Alexander Alliance, Tokyo. Sinclair is an AT International certified teacher and sponsor. www.sinclairstudio.com

^v Meade Andrews is an internationally recognized senior teacher of AT. She currently teaches as guest artist in theatre at Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, where she also maintains a private practice in the Alexander work. In the Princeton area, she offers classes and workshops at Westminster Choir College. Former director of the Dance Program at American University, Meade continues to teach workshops at the Studio Theatre in Washington, DC, her professional base for 20 years. She has also served as an acting teacher, and acting coach for over 30 theatrical productions. www.meadeandrews.net

^{vi} The fieldwork in Kochi, Japan took a surprising turn. The organizer wanted me to teach a large group of young students aged 18-24 who were studying to become Elementary Teachers. For this reason I asked my husband, who is a regular E.S.L teacher in Toronto to teach them English. We decided with the organizer that this would be a more successful learning experience than learning CI. As an Elementary Teacher on leave, for ethical and professional reasons I only want to work with students who consciously choose to learn CI.

^{vii} Pam Johnson has been dancing, choreographing, teaching, coaching and directing in Toronto for 32 years. She is currently a professor in theatre at Humber College, George Brown College and a faculty member of the School of Toronto Dance Theatre. She also regularly teaches master classes for dancers, actors and for the CI Improvisation community in Canada and the US. Pam has danced for many choreographers. She has toured the world as an actor/dancer with the acclaimed Canadian Opera Co. production, *Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung* directed by Robert LePage. Her choreography has appeared in fFida, Dances for a Small Stage, Square Zero, Dance Matters series, theatre and film productions, and on bicycles, trapezes and in anti-war events. Pam's theatre include: *Motherhouse* (Centaur Theatre), *Myth Me* and *By a Thread* (Myth productions), *Gravity Calling* (Tarragon), *The Stranger* (Praxis Theatre). Her film credits include features *Zero Patience* and *Million Dollar Babies* and many independent films. As a director, Pam's credits include the Canadian premier of *Marx in Soho*, *A Tribute to Howard Zinn* and music video *Toronto's Price Tag*. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Indiana University and an MA from York University. She has received grants from the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

^{viii} Dora-nominated dancer, Susan Lee's professional career as a performer, choreographer and educator spans twenty-five years. Based in Toronto, Canada she has originated roles in almost fifty world premieres by many established Canadian choreographers including Allen & Karen Kaeja, Holly Small, Yvonne Ng, Peter Chin and Maxine Heppner, performing across Canada, the US, Mexico, Portugal, Sweden, Singapore and Indonesia. As a company member of Kaeja d'Dance (1997-2008) she originated roles in many of their major stage works including *Abattoir*, *Asylum of Spoons*, *Resistance*, *Courtyard* and *Buried Monuments*. She is also featured in their award winning dance films, and dance film collaborations with Allen Kaeja and Emmy-nominated videographer Douglas Rosenberg. Lee's creative interest focuses on interdisciplinary collaborations and improvisation in performance. Many of her works combine dance, live music, video and interactive new media. Susan's choreography has been presented in dance festivals and series in Toronto, Ottawa, Halifax and Peterborough. Her work has been described as "...simple and extraordinary." (Halifax Chronicle-Herald) and "...a tour de force of magic and mystery" (the Globe and Mail. Lee (BFA, MFA York University) teaches CI improvisation, partnering techniques, structures for improvisation in performance, modern dance technique and is currently part-time faculty at York University.

^{ix} Mika Lillit Lior holds a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College and an M.A. in Dance Studies from York University. In New York, Lior performed with companies *LAVA*, *Mezclado Movement Group*, *Phillippa Kaye*, and *Raizes do Brasil; Capoeira Brooklyn*. Upon returning to Canada, Lior toured with Zimbabwean choreographer Gibson Muriva, and danced in Maria Isabel Rondon's "Barravento" at Montréal arts interculturels. A cofounder of the Mile End arts center *espace OSupa*, Lior's choreographic debut, "As Duas" (2009) was dubbed an "awe-inspiring truck-load of fearless athleticism" by Montreal's *the Hour*. While pursuing her M.A. Lior joined the aLOFT ensemble with Toronto's leading CI improvisers. In 2013 and 2014 Lior was the only Canadian dancer invited to participate in the Axis Syllabus international choreographic laboratory TRACES, in Benin, where she collaborated with West African artist Horton Ordovi and conducted research on ceremonial African movement practices. Her 2014 solo show "Cures for Fear" was adapted into a short film that won the Audience Award at the CI Dance International Film Festival in Toronto. Lior is currently pursuing a PhD at UCLA's World Arts & Cultures/Dance department, a critical focus on the postcolonial circulation of ritual dance forms in Northeastern Brazil.

^x Zita Nyarady (BPhil, BA, MES, PTP, PhD in Progress) is a dance, theatre and Circus artist. Zita jams, performs using CI improvisation and teaches. Zita has taught CI in Canada (including assisting Kathleen Rea at George Brown College), USA, Jamaica and Sweden. Highlights in her artistic training include the professional training program in Physical Theatre at Dell'arte international, study with Grupo Yuyachkani (Peru), scholarship recipient for the Bates Dance Festival where she trained with Nancy Stark-Smith, Chris Aiken and Angie Houser, participation in La Alternativa New Years Intensives (San Francisco) and being a member of the International Stilt Council at Odin Teatret (Denmark). Thanks to a Theatre Ontario grant Zita will be training with the artistic directors of Pilobolus in spring/summer 2014. Zita has had the good fortune of performing in various dance/theatre/circus projects across Canada, USA, Jamaica, Sweden, Scotland and Denmark. Zita makes performances: ones that involve giant stilt-birds building nests in cities, ones that involve the reincarnation of Amelia Earhart tangled in aerial silks, ones that involve 100+ canoes paddling in a clown production of *The Odyssey* and ones that have yet to be created.

^{xi} Apprentice: Madison Burgess is recently graduated from York University majoring in Dance. During her years as an undergraduate, Madison had the privilege of performing for the York Dance Ensemble in 2015/2016, working with many renowned choreographers including Carol Anderson, Susan Lee and Allison McCaughey. Madison was also fortunate to have performed as an extended cast member during her studies abroad in 2014/2015 with Lila Dance for their show *The Deluge*, choreographed by Abi Mortimer and Carrie Whittaker. Her own choreographic work has been show cased both at the University of Chichester and York University, pieces including *suite Women* and *among the memories*. Outside of school, Madison works for Crazy Pants Theatre Company choreographing musicals including *Seussical*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Robin Hood*. Madison is thrilled to be working alongside aLOFT as an apprentice for their upcoming project.

^{xii} Mentor: Dora Award-nominated performer Karen Kaeja is co-artistic director of Kaeja d'Dance with Allen Kaeja. A multi-award winner for innovation, choreography and performance, including the CDA "I Love Dance" Community Award for her vision of Porch View Dances, Karen has been recognized internationally with commissions and presented by festivals and performance series around the world. Celebrated as one of this country's top ten dance artists (NOW Mag and Toronto Life), she is a sought after teacher at conferences, festivals

and universities across North America. Karen was the first Guelph Contemporary Dance Festival resident artist and Memorial University/DanceNL's first dance artist in residence. www.kaeja.org

^{xiii} Louis Barbier was raised triculturally in Toronto, to parents from Hong Kong and France. Formerly formally trained as a molecular biologist, his moonlighting as a circus artist-educator became his career path during years of unlearning. Specialized in object manipulation, his exposure to partner acrobatics and improvisational dance led to contact improvisation as his principle dance practice. New to dance performance, he performed dance in *Balancing on the Edge*, a New Music/Circus Arts interdisciplinary production, in a piece choreographed by Montreal-based Emmanuel Cyr (Compagnie Manu Cyr'k). He is currently working for Reason d'Etre Dance Productions on a project heading for stage in Fall 2017.

^{xiv} Originally from Colombia, Mateo Galindo Torres is a dance artist based in Toronto. Torres has performed professionally in Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Germany, Mexico, and Panama. His latest projects include work with Peggy Baker, Jacob Niedzwiecki, Olga Barrios, Maxine Heppner, Aria Evans, Lemi Pomifasio, Alan Gilsean, Dreamwalker Dance Company, Julia Sasso, Suzanne Liska, Kaeja d'dance, and Kathleen Rea. Torres is one of the artistic directors of Form Contemporary Dance Theatre. With the company, Torres has choreographed and presented multiple pieces across Ontario and Montreal. Torres' work is often politically charged, inspired by social subject matters, and fuses his eclectic movement background.

^{xv} Sakiko Ishitsubo, interview with author June 8, 2016.

^{xvi} Nina Martin, Workshop in Berlin, Germany, notes by author, July 2010.

^{xvii} Rebecca Nettl-Fiol and Luc Vanier's book *Dance and AT: Exploring the Missing Link* provides a brief historical overview of AT in relation to developmental movement and to dance training. Practical descriptions, using multiple sequenced photos, explain how to work with AT in ballet and modern dance.

^{xix} Wilfred Barlow, in the "Introduction" of the 1985 edition of *Use of the Self*.

^{xx} Rebecca Bryant creates danceworks that combine movement with sound, text, video, and objects. Bryant has performed in 22 US states and in Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Spain, Germany, Romania, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. She is an active collaborator; she worked extensively with the Lower Left Performance Collective for 13 years and is a co-founder of PMPD (dance/music/new media). Her projects have received support from residencies at Earthdance (USA), Djerassi Resident Artist Program (USA), Guapamacátaro Art and Ecology Residency (Mexico), Camac Centre D'Art (France), and a choreographic grant from the Puffin Foundation. Bryant has danced for renowned choreographers including Victoria Marks, Nina Martin, Wally Cardona, Kim Epifano, Shelley Senter, and Lionel Popkin. She has taught workshops in New York, Stockholm, Oslo, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and at the Los Angeles Improvisational Dance Festival, West Coast CI Improv Festival, Texas Dance Improvisation Festival, CI Festival Freiburg, TransCI Festival, Kontakt Budapest Festival, and at numerous universities across the USA. She holds a BA in Visual Art and an MFA in Dance, and is currently on faculty at California State University, Long Beach. www.rebeccabryant.net

^{xxi} Author notes, December 17, 2015.

^{xxii} Faichney, informal interview with author, March 6, 2016.

^{xxiii} Pam Johnson, interview with author, March 2, 2016.

^{xxv} Steve Paxton, email exchange with author, March 10, 2016. In the late 1970s Paxton studied for two weeks at "Dartington College in Scotland doing mostly "chair work" (email).

^{xxvi} I have taken several of Martin's intensive workshops in Canada and Europe, and collaborate with Rebecca Bryant, associate artist in *Lower Left* with Martin et al.

^{xxvii} Steve Paxton, email exchange with author, March 10, 2016.

^{xxviii} Vahri McKenzie's research includes case studies of participants with little somatic experience attending workshops inspired and related to Nancy Stark Smith's Underscore combined with BMC practice.

^{xxix} Effort is one of four Laban modes, the others include Body, Space, and Shape (Brennan).

^{xxx} Rebecca Bryant, interview with author, December 23, 2015

^{xxxi} Rebecca Bryant, interview with author, December 23, 2015.

^{xxxii} Nina Martin, Workshop in Toronto notes by author, October 2007.

^{xxxiii} Rebecca Bryant, interview with author, December 23, 2015.

^{xxxiv} I chose to include photographs documenting our research rather than video, as I wanted the focus of the videos on the group piece.

^{xxxv} Susan Lee, rehearsal notes by author, December 15, 2016.

^{xxxvi} Susan Sinclair, interview with author, February 18, 2016.

^{xxxvii} Susan Sinclair, Alexander lesson with author, March 29, 2016

^{xxxviii} Pam Johnson workshop, author's notes, March 20, 2016.

^{xxxviii} Meade Andrews workshop, author's notes, April 2, 2016

^{xxxix} Pam Johnson, email exchange with author March 16, 2015.

^{xl} Earthdance is a dance residency particularly catering to the CI community, co-founded by Nancy Stark Smith.

^{xli} Maaya Fukumoto, informal interview with author in Tokyo, May 5, 2016.

^{xlii} Sakiko Ishitsubo, interview with author in Toronto, July 8, 2016.

^{xliii} Author Fieldnotes from Tokyo, May 3, 2016.

^{xliv} Sakiko Ishitsubo, interview with author in Toronto, July 8, 2016.

^{xl} Hiroko Takahashi, informal interview with author in Tokyo, May 6, 2016.

^{xlvi} Maaya Fukumoto, email exchange with author July 26, 2016.

^{xlvi} Minori Nagai, email exchange with author June 27, 2016.

^{xlvi} Hiroko Takahashi, informal interview with author July 3, 2016.

^{xl} I was a performer, composer and teacher for RAW from 2002-2008 and occasionally collaborate as a dancer/choreographer.

^l Pam Johnson, journal notes, June 15, 2016.

^{li} Susan Lee, interview with author June 30, 2016.

^{lii} Madison Burgess, interview with author June 30, 2016.

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- liii Madison Burgess, journal notes, June 23, 2016.
- liv Author Fieldnotes June 16, 2016.
- lv Author Fieldnotes May 3 and 4, 2016.
- lvi Author Fieldnotes, June 16, 2016.
- lvii Susan Lee, journal notes, June 17, 2016.
- lviii Pam Johnson, interview with author June 28, 2016.
- lix Susan Lee, interview with author June 30, 2016.
- lx Author Fieldnotes, June 16.
- lxi Susan Lee, interview with author June 30, 2016.
- lxii Piece description of “Tensegrity” by author in collaboration with the dancers.
- lxiii Mateo Galindo Torres, journal notes, Feb 8, 2017
- lxiv Mateo Galindo Torres, journal notes, March 3, 2017.
- lxv Zita Nyarady, interview with author June 23, 2016.
- lxvi Zita Nyarady, journal notes, June 23, 2016.
- lxvii Mika Lior, interview with author July 5, 2016.
- lxviii Johnson was the exception as she is only interested in the research aspect of the piece.
- lix Pam Johnson, interview with author June 28, 2016.
- lxx Pam Johnson, email exchange with author, July 27, 2016.
- lxxilxxi Louis Barbier, journal notes, March 3, 2017.
- lxxii Patrick Alcedo, rehearsal notes, February 22, 2017
- lxxiii Susan Cash, rehearsal notes, February 22, 2017
- lxxiv Louis Barbier, journal notes, March 3, 2017.

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